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GUS DAPPERTON: SUNSETS & SUNRISES

We connect with the alt pop riser to discuss the evolution of his approach and the sculpting and significance of his new album.



Photography by Jess Farrin

There's an otherworldly focus to the music of Gus Dapperton. Amongst the most acclaimed names in the alternative pop revolution commandeering the industry, the singer-songwriter is a visceral and progressive creator, weaving his way through the sonic and thematic worlds that he so meticulously crafts for himself.

Emerging in 2016 with his debut single, "Moodna, Once With Grace", that concocted him a centred aesthetic and immediate fan base, Dapperton has surged to artistic and commercial vitality, with the hugely popular *Orca* cementing his reputation as a household name. He has now returned with a new body of work, confident, potent and poignant, walking a seemingly instinctive path towards creative legacy.

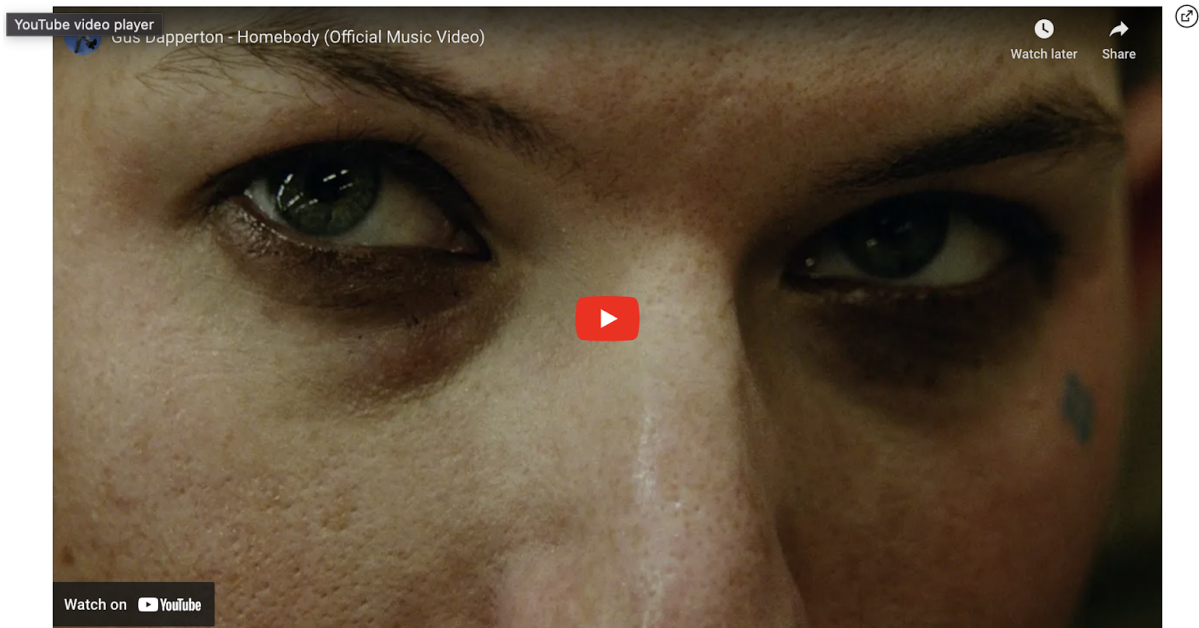
On *HENGE*, we are immersed within the complexion of duality. Under the setting of New York City across a single night, a tale is told through the perspective of a searching narrator. Dapperton expertly crafts thought-provoking juxtaposition across a multitude of topics – from life to death, change to secularity – through the eyes of a meandering soul, questioning love and romanticism along the way.

The album's collaborations are refined and focused; he enlists New Zealand trailblazer BENEÉ, esteemed poet Ocean Vuong and Nigerian auteur Cruel Santino for distinctive turns, highlighting the eclectic stylistic nature that bleeds from the LP's every crevice. From the anthemic opener "Sunset", to the ethereal elegance of "Horizons" and the hazy balladry of "Wet Cement", *HENGE* is an album of testing triumphant, highs and lows; a tightrope walk between hope and despair.

We had the utmost pleasure to dissect the album with Gus himself, discussing the evolution of his approach and the sculpting of its tone, delving into his musical origins and the essence of his artistry along the way.

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Read the exclusive interview...

Talk us through your musical origins. How did you first begin creating, and what inspired you in doing so?

I don't come from a musical family but my parents were huge music fans. Every Friday night growing up we would have dance parties. My dad had particularly great taste in music and I loved picking out CD's to play. It wasn't until eight grade that I started making music for real. In a class at school we were prompted to make a song on Garageband using loops. I immediately fell in love with production and composing. From the moment I hopped on Garageband I knew it's what I wanted to do for the rest of my life.

How did you begin to shape the sound that is now so cohesively your own?

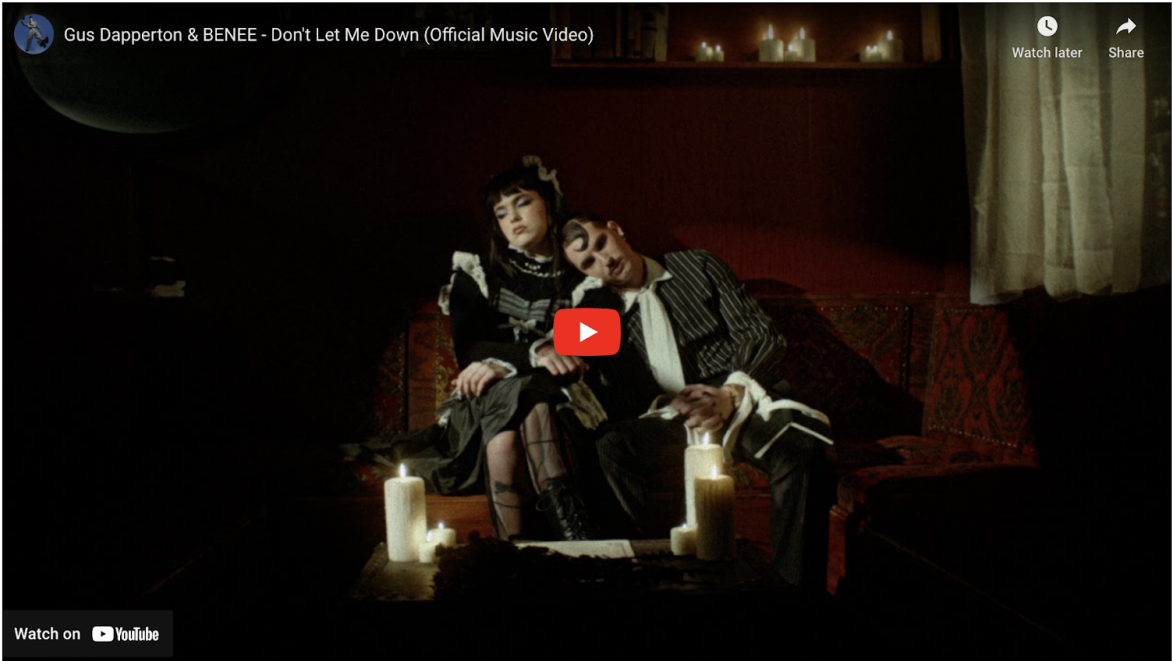
I think I always had an affinity for individualism and patterns in sound. My favorite artists were those with unique sounds I hadn't quite heard before. For example King Krule, Odd Future, and David Bowie. They also always knew how to tell a story over the course of a project. Immersiveness in music is what gives it character and life. I strive for that.

You are often defined stylistically as alternative pop. What does alt pop mean to you?

The words out loud sound fairly informative to what my music is. Alternative sounds whilst showing inspiration from general popular music structure and melody. That feels right to me. I think the negative effect of genre classification is lumping artists together just to try to make sense of them. I like the thrill of the unknown especially when diving into the catalog of a new artist. Sometimes genre defeats that thrill of discovery.

How would you define the essence of your artistry?

It has changed over the years I think. I'm not really quite sure how to interpret this but I can say what I believe my purpose here is. Music is not for the artist. It is for the beholder and the viewer. The only purpose with my art is to inspire the next generation after me to create, be themselves, and progress things forward in this world. Making music helps me to release tension and weight on my shoulders but its purpose once it's out in the world is to inspire others.



We're in love with your album *HENGE*! When you first set out to make the project, what were your aims and what was your vision?

It took me a few songs to discover what the vision was for this project. I wrote down the words "Wet Cement" and filled in the rest after. Once I made that song I knew what the concept for this album would be. It starts with Sunset and ends with Sunrise. The visual and lyrical agenda is one lost souls journey over the course of one evening. Throughout the night they battle dualities of life: one side seeking change and chaos while the other side seeks health, safety and monotony. After quarantine I had trouble balancing these push and pulls when trying to integrate back into the life we once knew. I thought maybe other folks struggled with this as well so I wanted to put it into song.

Talk us through the creative process, how did you begin sculpting the sound, tone and themes for *HENGE*?

The sound honestly came from the visual agenda. I wanted to explore themes of extreme light and dark in both the music and visuals. It led me to a lot of 80's fashion and hair/makeup aesthetics from the roaring 20's. That translated directly to the sound as well. I use a lot of 80's synths and clean jazz guitar tones on the record.

How has your style evolved on the new album since *Orca*?

I try to change my approach for each record. Mainly because I want it to stay interesting for me and the listener. I wrote *Orca* as a therapeutic release to help me with my own mental health issues. And I hoped with its release it could do the same for others. The goal with this album was to innovate and progress my own boundaries within music. And try to write songs about new themes I have not explored yet.

You're now signed to Warner, and the new LP is your major label debut. What made you switch to Warner for this body of work?

It felt like the right time and place. The people I work with there are really amazing. I believe my music is meant to be in the world and signing with them was a chance for it to be heard by more of the world than it's been heard by already.

What do you want listener to take away from the LP?

I want to excite the listener and inspire them to make change. I think everyone should create and get their thoughts down in some way shape or form. The reward of expressing yourself outweighs the risk.


Where do you want to take your artistry in year's to come?

I try not to think about the future as much as the present. Every day I try to learn and better understand the world and its art. I'm so thankful that I can wake up with love and create. It's a privilege. I hope to keep progressing musically and as a human being.

What else is to come from you this year?

I can't wait to start touring the US in September and also doing a European tour in October.

Listen to the full album...





Henge

Gus Dapperton

PREVIEW

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1	Sunset Gus Dapperton	4:45
2	Phases Gus Dapperton	3:56
3	Horizons Gus Dapperton	3:03
4	Homebody Gus Dapperton	3:15
5	The Stranger Gus Dapperton	3:42
6	Midnight Train Gus Dapperton	3:26
7	Lights (feat. Cruel Santino)	7:57