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"I love touring. I feel like a way better human being on tour."

BOYS TO MEN
OMAR APOLLO

PHOTOGRAPHED BY JACK BRIDGLAND
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VMAN 52: OMAR APOLLO IS UN-APOLLO-GETIC

The adored singer-songwriter, queer it boy, and rapidly rising star is in the midst of creating a new, larger-than-life album

Omar Apollo was arguably one of 2023's biggest breakout stars. But, as is usually the case for those who get Grammy-nominated for "Best New Artist," the 26-year-old Indiana native is far from "new" to music, or performing as a whole for that matter. After eight years of releasing music, the "Evergreen" singer was photographed by Jack Bridgland in LA, where Apollo was finishing up his sophomore album. After the biggest year of his life—filled with highs and lows—the chanteur seems more confident, and more comfortable with his rising fame than ever.

VMAN: I'll start off by saying that I messaged your stylist, Brandon [Tan], who used to be my intern, all the way back in 2019 like, "Who is this hot singer you are dressing now?" We wanted to set up a shoot and, well, four years later it finally happened.

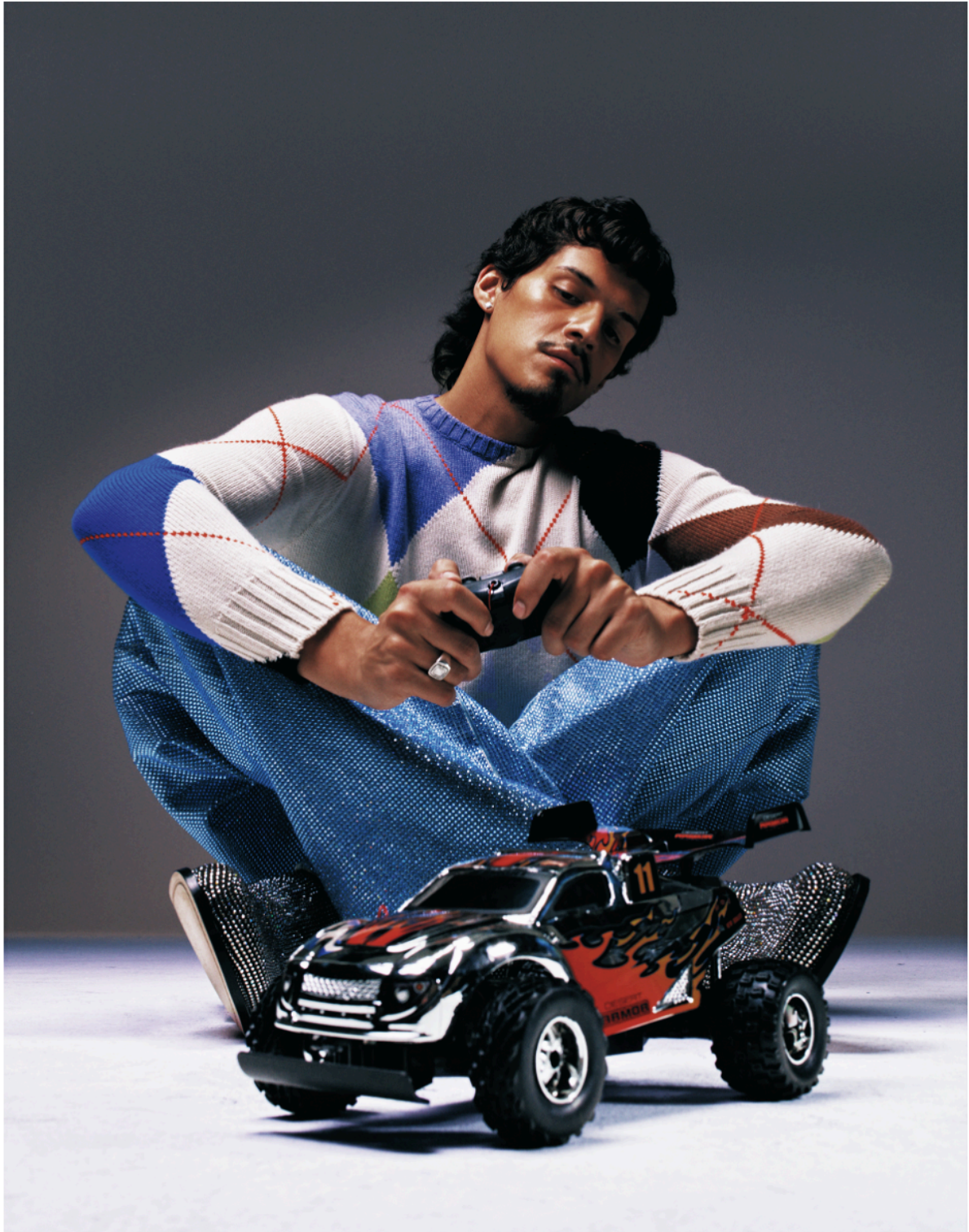
OMARAPOLLO: We love Brandon! He's such a darling.

VMAN: With that out of the way, I know you're working on a new album. Are you still recording it?

OMARAPOLLO: Yeah, it's not done yet. I'm actually about to go work some more on it. But it's close. I'm in a weird stage of making better songs every day. I'm trying to make the best version of what I can make at this point in my life. It's been maybe six, or seven months now that I've been tapped into "album, album, album," and nothing else. I've reached a really focused feeling now when I go to the studio. Like, it feels like it all makes sense. The music seems better. The words are coming out easier. Everything's going really well. The good thing is that there are a lot of songs—the hard part is gonna be picking the ones I like best.

VMAN: I read that you used to rent Airbnbs to avoid distractions while you were recording your albums.

OA: I'm way more comfortable now. I know how to make an album now. I've done it before. I know what it takes. I know where I wanna take it. I mean, I've been making the album here in LA, but I also made a lot of it in London for two months. And then some in Miami, a bit in New York. And now just in LA finishing it.



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VMAN: As you're finishing up the project, are there any themes you're finding yourself focus on for this album?

OA: I think there are definitely undertones and themes, you know, sonically. I hate the word "sonically..." It reminds me of—

VMAN: Sonic the Hedgehog.

OA: Exactly. But I guess like, the bed of sounds...wait that sounds worse.

VMAN: We're going downhill here.

OA: We're going downhill. Okay, but the themes are very...well, I'm kind of angry. I'm more angry on this album. I guess that's what I could say [about it]. A lot of the songs are leaning toward anger.

VMAN: Can I ask about that? Are you more pissed off now than you've been before or are you just more comfortable sharing anger in your music?



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OA: I'm just pissed off (laughs). It's not that deep. But one thing that I've done is gotten better at speaking about how I feel in the present moment. I used to go back years and years for the songs I was writing. "Evergreen," you know, that happened to me two years before I wrote it. As a writer, you know, that can be really hard to channel. I sit in a room with three or four other people, and you have to explain to them how you're feeling. But I love that I can do that now. I couldn't before.

VMAN: You've developed a really big and loyal fan base. What does it feel like working on new music this time around when you know that there are so many people eagerly anticipating it, which isn't the case for a brand-new artist?

OA: Well, you know, I've been making music for eight years. But definitely, over the past two years, I've gotten a lot more visibility than I ever had. Even last night, some kids saw me in a restaurant, ran home, got their vinyls, and brought them back for me to sign. But to be an artist is not to be in service of anyone else's opinions. Even my friends and team will be like, "We need to try something like this." Well, no one really tells me that because they know not to, but it gets implied. And I'm like, I don't work for any of you. I make music that moves me and I hope it moves other people...I do care about the people and seeing their faces react to the music and words, but the pressure is always the one I put on myself. I wouldn't be able to live my life as an artist if I sat and listened to every critique. And you know, I make music for me. I make songs that are literally just for my friends. They'll tell me they're into some type of music, and I get kind of jealous. So I'm like, "Fine, I'll go to the studio and make a song like that today." I don't put it out. I just send it to them, like, "This is for you, so you could bump it in the car instead of listening to that other person."



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VMAN: I love that you just can't stand them listening to somebody else.

OA: Yeah, it's supposed to be about me here (laughs). Like your friend makes music too, okay?!

VMAN: It must be an amazing creative exercise to try out all those genres, though.

OA: That's my life. It's a good exercise for sure. Even with rap—I've always been rapping, but obviously, you know, I'm a singer-songwriter. Rapping is a whole other skill set.

VMAN: Artists tend to have a love-hate relationship with touring that leans more towards hate. How do you feel about it, assuming you'll be on tour next year?

OA: I love touring. I feel like a way better human being on tour. I'm actually functioning and whole. This next tour, I'm definitely going to get into video games. This last tour I spent renting cars and going to lakes, watching the sunset every night. That makes me feel grounded.



All clothing *LOEWE*

VMAN: I know you were a dancer when you were younger, so I guess you also just love to perform.

OA: I love attention (laughs). It's fine. It doesn't bother me. I mean, maybe one time, I was in the street walking around New York and I was really sad. And I was getting noticed every two seconds and I was like, man, I should have put a hood on or something. But I was just sad. Other than that, it's never a problem.

VMAN: You're an ambassador for Loewe, who were by far one of the most popular brands in 2023. Why do you think people love them so much?

OA: I mean, every piece that came out from their last collection was beautiful. I wear the clothes every day. My closet is literally full of Loewe.



All clothing *LOEWE* / All jewelry talent's own

VMAN: It better be...

OA: (Laughs) It really is. And I just realized how much their clothes can make you feel more confident. When you're in a room full of people wearing something beautiful that drapes over your body, I mean, what else could you ask for? I always say that I want to be able to dress so I don't have to speak. Like, I just look good enough.

VMAN: Since we're doing this interview in December, I have to ask you about goals for 2024.

OA: You know, 2023 was full of amazing moments for me. But also some of the hardest moments I've ever faced in my life. I would hope that in 2024, I can respect myself a bit more. I also want to hold my niece and nephews more. I want to go see them more. I want to make more bread so I can buy a house in Indiana and they can all run around. I have those types of goals.



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