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DAN- IEL AV- ERY

Hair Ross Cosgrove Make-up Charli Avery using Bobbi Brown



DJ, producer, auteur: Five years on from his masterpiece debut album, Daniel Avery is back with 'Song For Alpha', another insight into his distinctive, alternative take on techno, influenced by everything from ambient to shoegaze. No-one else does it quite like this

THE PUBLIC SIDE of Daniel Avery is on full display at Concrete in Paris at around 6pm. Yes, that's not a typo; his last gig of the December weekend is due before *Antiques Roadshow* airs, a fact which initially had us stumped. But then, we'd never been to Concrete before. Boarding the Port De La Rapée barge where the club is situated on a grey Parisian evening, moving past the outdoor areas which are by now damply redundant, we have our doubts. That is, until we get to the main dancefloor and it becomes clear why the party is called Samedidimanche (ie Saturday and Sunday). Concrete recently got a 24-hour license, and now its Saturday night parties crack on until Monday at 2am. This explains why the crowd has that tired-yet-energetic feel about it – everyone's dressed to sweat in loose fashions that could be straight from the 90s (one young, dreadlocked clubber even rocks a Coogi sweater that Biggie would love, though it wouldn't have fitted him). Vibe-wise, Concrete feels like Club der Visionaere in Berlin – and not just because we're by the river, or indeed floating on it. It's because despite the doorman having a full-face tattoo (even if it was make-up, Sven from Berghain, consider yourself served), everyone is welcome here. Concrete is a real 'basement, red light and a feeling' kind of joint. "I feel at home as soon as I walk in", Avery tells us. "It's a real no-bullshit kind of place: no backstage, no VIP... this is what it's all about for me, always has been," he smiles.

As Avery makes his way to the booth the effect on the crowd is palpable, from when the first couple of fanboys greet him to the floor becoming a hive of seething bodies within a couple of tracks. It's so hot in the booth that Avery shrugs off the blue shirt he was wearing over a black T-shirt and jeans, lights a smoke and gets right down to business, dancing non-stop while working the crowd to a fever pitch that belies the time of day. His un-Shazamable set

is best defined as pumping, propulsive techno; we pick out a few tracks from his new album, his own 'Sensation', a slice of neuron-searing electro from Anthony Rother called 'Omnitronic' and the more austere robot funk of JF Burma's 'Taiga'. Everything builds to an absolutely storming finale via 'Rote 1', the first release from his ongoing techno project with Volte-Face aka Casper Clark, the BleeD club promoter-turned-DJ/producer and his friend of over a decade since they both booked talent at Camden's Lock Tavern. "Something people probably don't know about Dan is the sheer extent of his work ethic," Clark had told us earlier in the week. "He did about four album's worth of material that he and Erol [Alkan, Avery's closest musical confidante and his label boss at Phantasy] had to whittle down for the album. I'll be honest, I wish I was half as driven in the studio, and I'm not gigging half as much as him!"

Avery's work ethic and Alkan's influence are nods to the other side of Avery's personality, the one that exists away from the instant rush of the DJ booth. His new album of sustained sonic mastery of both heavy techno and more pensive moments, 'Song For Alpha', establishes beyond doubt that Avery is a techno 'auteur' (a term dating back to the French New Wave films of the 1950s and 60s and the idea of film directors and later musicians being 'authors' of their creative output). That's why he can headline clubs and festivals with prime-time sets of sinuous techno on the one hand and produce music that reflects a range of influences galaxies beyond the techno bubble on the other – from the 'shoegazing', otherworldly noise of Kevin Shields' My Bloody Valentine and the psychedelic meanderings of Spaceman 3 to his recent fascination with the industrially brutal Factory Floor and the ambient synths of Nine Inch Nails alumnus Alessandro Cortini. Avery is firmly a part of Britain's school of 'indie techno', along with people like Erol and ▶▶



MUSE AT 10

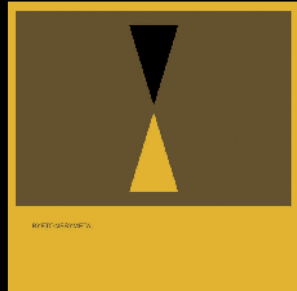
Daniel on the albums that inspired the making of 'Song For Alpha'

01



William Basinski 'The Disintegration Loops'
I put this on in the studio when I need to reset my thoughts. For such a seemingly simple piece of music – a single loop disintegrating over the course of an hour – the room feels empty when it's over.

02



Byetone 'SyMeta'
This entered my life at a crucial time and encouraged me to take production seriously. It still sounds like it's from the future. Raster-Noton took more chances than most and its output remains an inspiration.

03



Autechre 'Amber'
Much like Kraftwerk, the early Autechre output is computer music with a human soul. This era had a big effect on me early on. Simple, beautiful melodies underpinned by otherworldly sounds and textures.

04



Chris And Cossey 'Trance'
The industrial and mechanical percussive tones on this album were something I often referred to on 'Song For Alpha'. The synth sounds, too. Fuck, all of it actually.

05



Brian Eno 'Discreet Music'
There is so much incredible Eno work to choose from, but this is an album I've been returning to a lot recently – particularly when travelling. To me it represents hope.



06

Carla dal Forno 'You Know What It's Like'
Stripped to its bare essentials and full of space. Along with HTRK and Tropic Of Cancer, Carla's records often offer a much-needed slowing of pace for me in the studio.



07

Acronym 'June'
Acronym seem to release an amazing album every six months and the Northern Electronics label is one of the best about. Right now feels like a golden era for psychedelic techno.



08

Karen Gwyer 'Rembo'
Something I've been playing all year from a producer who is continually pushing herself forwards. The atmosphere is intense but totally enveloping and full of hooks in which to get lost.



09

Plastikman 'Sheet One'
Hawtin is able to get more out of a handful of machines than most producers with a huge set-up. This album contains so many blueprints for acid tracks that are still referred to today, 25 years on.



10

Aphex Twin 'Selected Ambient Works 85-92'
The electronic album I've listened to more than any other over the years, it sunk in deep at an early age and has stayed with me. The best there is, the best there was and the best there ever will be.

Andrew Weatherall (the other creative angel on his shoulder for whose club A Love From Outer Space his drug-chug anthem – and eponymous album track – 'Drone Logic' was written); fans of alternative rock who now make dance music. All share a routine that sees them immersed in the studio during the week, while gigging internationally every weekend.

At 32 but looking no older than the 20-somethings in his crowds, the tall, teenager-slim and almost gangly Avery's been a DJ for 14 years. He's come a long way from Project Mayhem in Bournemouth, where aged 18 he warmed up the bar for an alternative indie night that played post-punk favourites like Gang Of Four, Talking Heads, ESG and New Order alongside early electroclash like Peaches and Miss Kittin. A film-obsessed teenager (especially the work of Lynch, Kubrick and Hitchcock), when he didn't have his head stuck in a book (Murakami, Copeland, Woolf), the young Avery was making music in his bedroom on cheap drum machines, or travelling to London for gigs, having seen his first, The Prodigy, with his father, aged just 11. There were local gigs too, but London, two hours away by train, was the place where an indie kid for whom DJ pretensions simply didn't exist would realise that putting on records in public was something he enjoyed doing. So much so, in fact, that recently he's been playing all-night-long club sets, which, like his current show on NTS, are about "building the atmosphere and the sound from the ground up. My longest set was at [Brixton's] Phonox from 2pm to midnight on a Sunday. I love being able to explore ambient and drone music – as well as electronic club music and electronica – but being able to draw a line between them and showing it all comes from the same place. I think the best clubs have a sense of quiet about them, too; not in a volume sense, necessarily, but more that you can abandon yourself there. That goes back to my days as a warm-up DJ – you need patience; the crowd and the DJ have to trust each other. That idea of patience is so important in music, I believe, as well as quiet. You need to trust, you need to pay attention... and that trust, that patience, is in such short supply now in the wider world."

"In today's turbulent political climate we find ourselves in a world that's very loud, that can feel like it's closing in on us, and the role of clubs is to offer sanctuary. Clubs don't need to be overly political places; I believe they're a place of shelter from the darkness of the world. They offer a light in that darkness. That said, a DJ set is literally about the free exchange of ideas. It's an international community... I don't give a fuck about trade deals or the economics of all that is happening right now, but I do feel that we can't lose the right to move around and exchange ideas – otherwise the world stops moving forward," he says, his usually quiet voice steely with resolve.

During our conversations Avery is very careful about what he says and how he says it, and indeed he's so softly spoken we worry about our voice recorder catching his musings. From the clothes he favours by French labels (he likes a simple, clean aesthetic) to his hard-to-read face – everything says he's a serious man who doesn't do anything by halves. That includes deeply considering our questions, always at pains to say just the right thing. If he played poker he'd probably be very good at it, but there's also a bit of shyness there that's hard to reconcile with the effervescent dancer bobbing under a nest of shaggy blonde curls in the DJ booth.

"[Keeping] regular hours in the studio during the week [helps me] combat the low-level anxiety that comes from DJing when at heart I'm a pretty shy, quiet person," he explains. "I'm in the position of being a quiet person in a loud business – I know that might sound odd, but I need that dichotomy. As loud as my life is in clubs, I need quiet in the studio, which is why I'm based in a converted container on the Isle of Dogs, not in a busy part of town... I've certainly got that in the studio, that quietness away from it all and I think that comes across on the new album. 'Drone Logic' [Avery's debut] had a restless energy to it, and while I'm still very fond of it, I can hear a ▶▶

ALESSANDRO CORTINI

The Nine Inch Nails synth player first worked with Dan in July 2017 on 'Sun Draw Water', a 7" that explored their shared love of 'industrial drones and expansive electronics'

Daniel Avery: To me your music represents escapism, something I've always been drawn to in music. Are you consciously aware of this idea in the studio?

Alessandro Cortini: I don't know if it fits the classic definition, but I would assume it is a form of escapism. My usual approach in the studio (or outside the studio, since most of my writing happens in normal places as opposed to in a professional environment) is to come up with something that makes me feel good and removed from rules and schemes temporarily, while trying to prioritise the personal need for happiness and reward. It's very similar to playing with toys when you are young, and in the end that's the feeling I am looking for. The ideal would be for this not to be escapism, but the very essence of making music. I'd like to consider this reality as opposed to it being an escape from it, but you know... society says otherwise.

DA: We both began making music mostly using guitars and pedals. I feel that I can still hear that in your electronic music. Do you agree? Synths offer a world of possibilities, but recently in the studio I've been returning to the limitations of pedals and found the restriction inspiring. It feels like home, in a way.

AC: I've recently been playing a lot of guitar and getting away from synths, partly because of my move to Europe and not having a proper music space but mostly because I got tired of the options and overwhelming amount of tools that are available at any given moment. Even when working with synths, I tend to have more productive and enjoyable sessions if I concentrate on a smaller environment or one instrument alone. Guitar pedals are in a way little instruments, since they tend to add, for the most part, a new language or inflection to the instrument you run through them, whether it's a synth, a guitar or vocals. They're also very manual, hands on, which I enjoy.

DA: Were there any particular ambient or drone records that got you interested in the genre initially? I heard Eno's 'Music For Airports' at a young age and it's never stopped ringing in my head. This year I've become obsessed with Von Haze's 'VII' album; it seems to be a corner of music that is always finding new ideas within itself.

AC: I would say probably Richard D James' 'SAW 85-92' and 'SAWII'. To this day they pretty much cover everything I feel needs to be covered, in terms of mood. That said, there are plenty of artists and records that I enjoy in this genre such as Abul Mogard (who I truly love), the very early Varg releases and to a



certain extent, Belong.

DA: How do you think that working with Trent Reznor and Nine Inch Nails has affected your solo work? I've heard you say that some of your tracks were initially written as lullabies to help you sleep while on tour...

AC: I think one of the things I learned from working with Trent is to try stuff out and not be afraid of the results; to use the studio as a canvas where anything goes, as opposed to "going to work, being productive". Granted, that tends to be the result for him most of the time, in the sense that he and Atticus are very prolific and resolute in their art. In my case, a lot of musical activities can be confined to being just personal enjoyment and relief, and never make it into a public channel, since their purpose remains to make myself feel good/better/happy. I really believe in the therapeutic abilities of making music for one's self.

DA: I'm excited about our [work in progress] collaboration. It feels as if new ideas are emerging that I never would have explored on my own; to me that's the true spirit of collaboration. How have you been approaching it?

AC: I agree. It feels like a very refreshing approach on my end as well. While I have collaborated with other artists I can't say I do it that often... I feel there has to be a connection with the other half, either with their art, or with the person, or both. I was really blown away by your record, 'Drone Logic', so when you reached out to work on something together I was already more than willing to give it a try and see what could come out of it... From a more practical point of view, being fed an already formed idea really works for me. It's easy for me to create on top of these concepts if I feel there's an affinity, and so far it's been a lot of fun to come up with new voices to add. I think it's a good balance between both our personalities.



MARY ANNE HOBBS

Daniel Avery in conversation with broadcasting icon Mary Anne Hobbs

Daniel Avery: Growing up in Bournemouth, I thought I hated club culture because I couldn't connect with the version of it I saw in my immediate line of sight. It was actually listening to you on The Breezeblock and hearing things like Autechre that got me interested. Did you have a similar experience in your youth?
 Mary Anne-Hobbs: I had a similar experience of growing up in a small town – I'm from a small village called Garstang in the Pennines. I remember a couple of vivid incidents in my youth, and one of them was bringing home David Bowie's album 'Low'. I sat on the floor for hours and hours listening, trying to decode what he was communicating to me. There was something about that electronic aesthetic and also the space within the sound that was very formative for me. And the second was John Peel. I grew up in a time when music was a much rarer commodity and coming across John Peel almost by accident was like a gateway to an alternate universe of sorts. You might only love every third record, but you knew others probably loved the ones you didn't. To be introduced to this rainforest of sound was really formative. **DA: Was there a reason behind the show being called The Breezeblock? I always had the idea that it was because, alone, a breezeblock's not as special but as part of something bigger it's vital – and you can apply that analogy to music.**
 MAH: I love that everyone has their own interpretation of it! If you want to

know the truth, it comes from my experience of queuing up outside The Blue Note in Hoxton to get into Goldie's Metalheadz night. I was standing in the slow breeze queueing round the block. I only told Goldie very recently. I was and still am relatively shy, and would never have asked to be on the guest list for something like that. But some of my favourite experiences at clubs have been meeting people in the queue with that burning sense of anticipation. **DA: With late-night radio presenters like yourself, John Peel, and I'd probably include Gilles Peterson here as well, you were playing quite difficult music in lots of ways but because you were very softly-spoken people there was a real feeling of welcoming inclusiveness to the shows. Is that something that's always on your mind with presenting?**
 MAH: I see my shows as a bridge. On one side there's a collection of the world's most fascinating artists, and on the other there's one of the world's hungriest and most ambitious audiences. It's my job to bring the two together in the best way I can. You get this triangulation between me, the artists and the audience, and we'll all communicate via the show or social media. I think audiences are far more sophisticated than a lot of institutions give them credit for, and John Peel knew that, too. **DA: That rings so true to me. There's this idea that the younger generation have no attention span, but I think that's**

bollocks. Human beings can't have completely changed in the 15-20 years the internet has been about. I've been playing a lot of eight, nine or 10-hour sets. I start with ambient and work towards bleeding edge techno and I've found that the younger members of the audience are there from start to finish.
 MAH: I opened my 6 Music Recommends show with a 16-minute Peter Broderick track recently, so I agree with you. I honestly don't believe that any music fan listens while checking their watch and thinking, 'This has been playing for six minutes.' **You've always invited artists to contribute to your show, whether that's a mix or people coming in and playing their inspirations. Are there any that stand out for you?**
 People still bring up Dubstep Warz every week on social media. It's remarkable. I think it created a tipping point for the dubstep sound. The other thing I'm incredibly proud of is the BBC Prom we did with Nils Frahm. I'll often say that was the greatest night of my life. I'd nurtured Nils for two and a half years, playing his music on my show and, though it was considered radical, having him play the Royal Albert Hall felt completely right. It was 11 months in the making and on the night, there was a Tube strike in London. But absolutely everyone made it. There wasn't an empty seat in the house! **Listen to Mary Anne Hobbs on 6 Music on Saturdays and Sundays, 7-10am**

CAI GRIFFIN, LAURA LEWIS/BBC

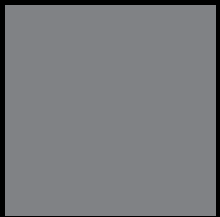
younger version of myself there. There were moments of quiet on that album, but I can hear now that they weren't fully realised. The newer work is far more concerned with the extremes of light and dark."

It was in a club that Avery first encountered Erol Alkan, when he caught the last few years of Trash at The End, where Erol's indie-electro Monday nighter pushed a path clear for indie rockers to embrace more electronically influenced acts like Soulwax and LCD Soundsytem. Erol remembers meeting him there backstage in 2006: "You could tell early on: 'Yeah, this guy is for real,'" he says. "Dan is very observant and articulate, and that's always been the case. I think that filters through his DJing and his production. I've always felt that he had a sense of purpose; some urgency about him, even though he's quite laid back. He's very focused. I've seen that from DJing alongside him and eventually signing him to my label."

Trash, of course, led Avery to Bugged Out!, where Erol was also a resident, and he eventually made his debut at Fabric in 2006, at just 21. By then he was working in Pure Groove Records (where he met Ghost Culture and Kelly Lee Owens), but when that closed in 2011 he decided to go for it as an artist. "It was a leap of faith, but I was confident that I was finally able to actualise some of the sounds in my head. I started spending countless hours in various studios across London, every day of the week, borrowing equipment from wherever I could. Every session felt like an experiment, a trip into the unknown; but the rush and excitement of discovery was totally addictive. Through reconnecting with some old friends I ended up working out of Weatherall's Bunker studio and had the opportunity to personally hand him a CD of my work every few weeks." That was when it all started happening: Weatherall hailed "the nice young man working in my studio" as a purveyor of "gimmick-free machine funk of the highest order" in *Time Out's* 'DJ Stars Of 2012' feature, and a pretty much unknown Dan was asked to mix the 'Fabriclive 66' compilation. "They took a risk on me, which they have done from the beginning. It's a place I'm always happy to come back to for that reason," he says.

Fabric looms large in Avery's professional life, as the scene of his seminal early residency but also where, in 2014, he started booking the whole club for his Divided Love events. DJ Nobu, another member of the alternative techno firmament (Japanese division), was lined up as a guest in October 2016, only to see the club lose its licence. The gig eventually went ahead on short notice at Phonox on a Sunday, a two-hander in which the outer realms of psychedelic techno were explored as they cemented their new musical alliance. Avery has plenty of time for the likes of Nobu, Dr Rubinstein of Berlin/Tel Aviv, Courtesy of Denmark (whom he just toured East Asia with), Inga Mauer, HAAi and Powder from Japan, all of whom are representative of the growing number of dance music artists who have made their name as DJs first and foremost. "I don't think it's true that you need to have a record out now [to make it as a DJ]," he says. "One good thing about how interconnected we all are now is that word of a good performer travels. Ten years back there were a lot of people who were DJing simply because they had a record out, and you could tell. There was something cynical and passionless about it. Those DJs I just mentioned live and breathe music. Their rise can only be healthy for the scene."

It's clear, though, that Avery's auteur heart is very much in the studio these days. That's why he's deliberately taken his time over 'Song For Alpha', which includes moments of sheer dancefloor exhilaration – like the aptly titled 'Sensation' with its droning bass and nail-sharp kick, or the ironically-monickered 'Diminuendo' (meaning 'diminishing loudness' in Italian) which proves he's still got his machine-funk chops as its crunchy snares give way to synapse-searing bass. But for every one of these there's a 'Citizen // Nowhere', which was "the last track of the album to be finished, actually. It's simply a pad and a lot of cut-up white noise. I knew that it had to come in the middle of the record, and it felt like the last piece of the puzzle." It drops like glitchy, leftfield hip hop, something that smacks of Four Tet or Aphex Twin. Avery agrees: "Well, I did consider calling the album, 'Aphex, Eno and Eccies.'" A second goes by before he cracks a smile, his trademark blond locks bouncing as he allows himself to laugh, letting his guard down for just a moment. **'Song For Alpha' is out March 9 on Phantasy Sound**



THE MIX

Daniel Avery talks you through his exclusive Mixmag mix

- Hypoxia 'Active Tension' (BL_K Noise)**
"My favourite track of the last year and something I've been opening my all-night sets with"
- Henning Baer 'Burning Chrome' (MANHIGH)**
"Feels like the inside of a jet engine. In a good way"
- Umwelt 'State Of Matter' (Ekman remix) (Shipwrec)**
"The sound of a 303 biting chunks out of a club system is one of my favourite things in the world"
- Lost Trax 'The Saturnian System' (Delsin)**
"Timeless-sounding dreamscape electro on Delsin, recently reissued"
- Andrea Parker 'Invasion' (Touchin' Bass)**
"Incredible electro from a master, made around the time I started collecting electronic records. It's genuinely worth checking out all of Andrea Parker's stuff"
- Plant43 'Spider Silk Structures' (Semantica)**
"Semantica is easily one of my favourite techno labels. [Label boss and Spanish DJ] Svreca has a genuinely exciting approach to everything he does, and is constantly breaking new artists"
- Mike Davis 'Communiqué From An Absent Future 2' (Brenda)**
"This is from a mysterious little Berlin label called Brenda which keeps sending me killer techno records"
- Neel 'Bassiani' (Token)**
"Some people would call this a 'trippy roller'. I don't know what that means, but this is a big record for me at the moment"
- Patrick Siech 'Eter' [Parabel]**
"A 12" I picked up recently. I don't know much about it other than it feels like the walls are closing in when played in a club"
- Sigma 'Black Massing' (Wata Igarashi Dark Falls remix) (Token)**
"Wata Igarashi deserves to take over the world this year. Part of an amazing wave of DJs/producers currently coming out of Japan"
- Daniel Avery 'After Dark' (Phantasy)**
"A new track from the 'Slow Fade' EP. Both these artists make inspired club records that sound unlike everything else out there"
- Ian William Craig 'An End Of Rooms' (Houndstooth)**
"Taken from a beautiful new comp on Fabric's Houndstooth label. It felt like the perfect ending"
- Jensen Interceptor 'Glide Drexler' (Central Processing Unit)**
"Central Processing Unit is an amazing label that takes the classic Sheffield spirit but does new things with it. I find myself playing their records in every set"
- Claro Intellecto 'Hurt' (Delsin)**
"Claro Intellecto has made some of the most interesting-sounding electro records of the past decade and beyond. He's the king of pads, too"
- Karen Gwyer 'Why Don't You Make Your Bed' (Don't Be Afraid)**
"Karen makes machine music with so much life and experimentation. One of the most underrated artists around"
- Ploy 'Garys' (Hemlock)**
"I played some gigs with Courtesy around Asia at the end of last year. It was interesting to hear how we pushed each other in different directions. This track was one of the tour highlights"
- Hodge & Randomer 'Slipping' (Clone Basement Series)**
"Both these artists make inspired club records that sound unlike everything else out there"
- Daniel Avery 'Fever Dream' (Inga Mauer remix) (Phantasy)**
"Inga is a truly exciting new techno DJ and one of the coolest people you'll meet. I'm excited to share this remix"