



MUSIC

## GENERATION TOMORROW: **LIL MARIKO**

by [Alex Brzezicka](#)

Bow down, Lil Mariko is a screamo queen serving sexy empowerment.

*Jump into our series featuring fresh faces who are on the way to define the sounds and aesthetics of the, not so distant, future. The cultural revolution is happening now and we don't want you to miss any of it. Let's push boundaries together.*

Catboys congregate, vapers suck harder, hoes shine your shoes. Anyone who has ever been called a slut, felt insecure about their sexuality because of society's lame norms, or been shamed for any expression of their identity, watch this: there's a lightning storm coming to strike all the haters along the way, and the name's Lil Mariko. She's a viral meme queen whose reign spreads well-beyond social media. We always praise the teacher who tells us when to kneel and when to knock someone down.

The crazy ride was kicked-off by Lil Mariko freestyling to Full Tac's, her partner/producer, beats and birthing a super funny, super psycho single, 'Where's My Juul?', sounding as if Poppy ate The Prodigy and the bellyache irritated the hell out of her. From there, she went straight into hardcore genre-less sonic experimentations with metal, hyper-pop and techno, switching from cute to cut-throat in a split second. She's got a legion of edge-bending collaborators already behind her, Dorian Electra, Rico Nasty, Zheani and Mood Killer, to drop a few names. Stomp by stomp, Lil Mariko subverts meanings, hysterically laughing at anyone daring to challenge her – like it was possible?! The shield she made of sassy irony, bad-ass screams and cotton-candy punches is bulletproof.

Under the steel hides a sweet – and a little bit shy – artist who, just by an accident, made her way through TikTok, viral singles and gag-worthy collabs to the international stages. The power of Lil Mariko lies in imperfections: she's so fiercely humane, slaying by night and day, shouting top of her lungs stuff some would blush thinking of. It's really rare to get a performer who makes you want to rip your own clothes off. Encouraged to embrace our sexuality in all of its forms and shun the bullies, we feel riotously ecstatic. Lil Mariko talked to us about the journey so far, just before her debut London show at The Underworld, showing off her brand-new whip.

Hey Lil Mariko! So, you're about to play a debut live show soon, how do you feel about it?

Oh, I feel really excited. I'm so honoured and happy to have it at The Underworld. This is such a legendary space. It's pretty much sold out there so that's really cool. Yeah, super excited. I think people in the UK will understand my bad humour. That's pretty much it. A little nervous. I think you could tell.

I can imagine it was quite a crazy ride since 'Where's My Juul?' went viral to where you are now. How come the Lil Mariko persona was born and who are they?

'Where's My Juul' basically started as a joke. Prior to this, I never really saw myself pursuing a career in music because before this, I was an illustrator. I went to school for illustration. Just being on stage even, that's something that I have a great phobia of but I feel like the Lil Mariko persona in a way acts as a bit of a shield. Also, just making music that's a joke in a way is also a shield because it's like, you can criticize me, I'm literally making stuff with the intent of it being

are, you can criticize me. I'm literally making stuff with the intent of it being bad. Having a viral thing during the pandemic has been extremely surreal. It's really hard to go out now and have people be like, or even seeing in the comments or things being worried, or like pictures. People comment, like, 'Where's my Juul girl?'. I'm really grateful too because this kind of thing doesn't happen very often. I'm excited to be here in general.



Your music is really aware of the sexualisation/Asian fetishism going around especially online but still finds a way to flip it and take the power back, like for example 'Hi, I'm a slut'. It's really empowering. Does it feel like that for you too?

Oh yeah, of course. For a lot of the songs, I'm drawing from personal experience and just being a pretty timid person in general. I find it difficult to do that in person so that's how it ended up becoming a song of anger or frustration. It gets allocated into something creative.

Projecting parts of your character into something external.

For sure. It's been good for me. I'm still pretty shy but I think it helped me come out of my shell a little bit more.

Whenever new, pushing-boundaries artists emerge, especially if they're a part of any minority, the press/industry is always quick to label them/put them into one box. Do you feel pressure like that?

Not really. Mostly because I don't really like to read any [comments] and I'm also not very good at keeping up with what's trendy in music now I've just never been too bothered with trying to fit into a box. What Jared and I are doing with our music, we're doing it just out of fun, to express something that's silly, a silly thought. Trying not to worry about it, you know?

That's the best attitude because it's about you having fun if someone disagrees, fuck them

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Exactly. With the genre-bending stuff, I'm literally just taking influence from things I like. I'm not trying to make it sound a certain way. It's just like 'let's pull stuff from this and this influence'. All over the place.



Every artist has their muse. Who is a source of inspiration for you?

Björk's been like a trailblazer. I'm not just not to say that I'm comparing my music to Björk at all because, no. That would be outrageous. But I feel like Björk is on a similar wavelength because they don't really care about what it sounds like or if people think it's weird. They do what they think is cool at the time or what excites them. That takes a lot of guts to do. I was just showing some friends this Björk album called Medúlla. The whole album is made up of grunting or just like human noises. That's so ahead of time. It was really cool. Jimmy Urine from Mindless Self Indulgence. He's so unhinged and completely unfiltered. That's something that I aspire to. Though, I do feel like he's probably done some problematic stuff. But you know, just, like raw, unhinged, not giving a single shit kind of attitude.

What are you working on right now?

We are working on a deluxe album. We have some remixes of the past little EP and they'll be some bonus tracks on there. For the foreseeable future, if I come up with an album, I would like it to be a bit more thoughtful and tell a proper story. For right now, I don't really have a good concept yet. As of right now, besides the deluxe, I'm gonna just do singles. Just rock it out. But if it comes together, it'll come together.



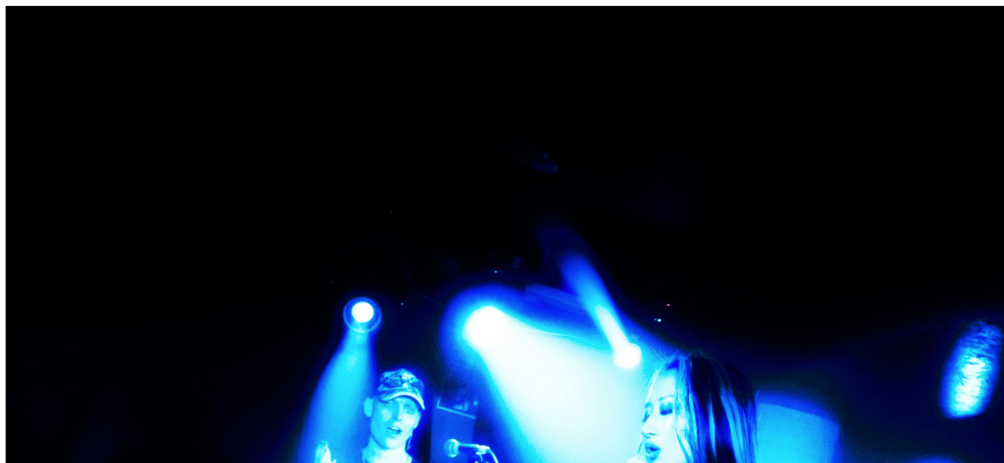


What's your relationship with social media?

Obviously, a lot of my music is influenced by happenings on social media. Usually, when I say don't look at it, I mean I try not to look at things about myself because reading stuff about yourself when it's not so nice, is kind of weird or upsetting. Although, even reading positive stuff, pardon me, because I have incredibly low self-esteem. They're just blowing smoke up my ass. My relationship with social media is complicated. I can't really put it into words. For the most part, my experience has been very positive. There's just so much that's happening at the same time. It's extremely overwhelming.

It's also strange that everyone expects artists to be content creators straight away.

Having to create content for work, almost kind of discourages me to do that. Before I was posting all the time because I was like, 'I don't care. Nobody is going to see it!' Now I feel a bit more pressure to make it. People are going to see it. I need to be more thoughtful about what I'm posting. That's just a part of it.





What should be the role of the new-gen artists in modern society?

Artist's message for society is? I feel like, at least my art, not just music because I'm pretty selfish I feel like artists should just... It's just important to if something invokes feelings whether more negative or positive, don't be afraid to put them out. It's like this one stupid expression: if a tree falls and no one's around to hear it. People should be, or artists especially, fearless about putting stuff out. Don't worry about the reception.

It's the apocalypse. What's your weapon of choice?

Crossbow.

That's a good one.

Quiet.

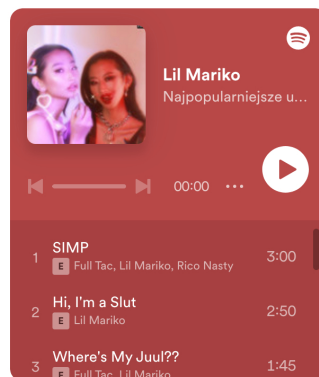
A silent assassin.

Exactly.

Generation Tomorrow features new faces who are on the way to define, not so distant, creative future and shaking society up a little. Who would be your choice?

Dorian Electra.

*Follow Lil Mariko on Instagram [here](#) and press play on her below now...*



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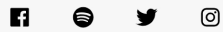
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