



MUSIC

## JNR CHOI TAKES US OUTTA THIS WORLD

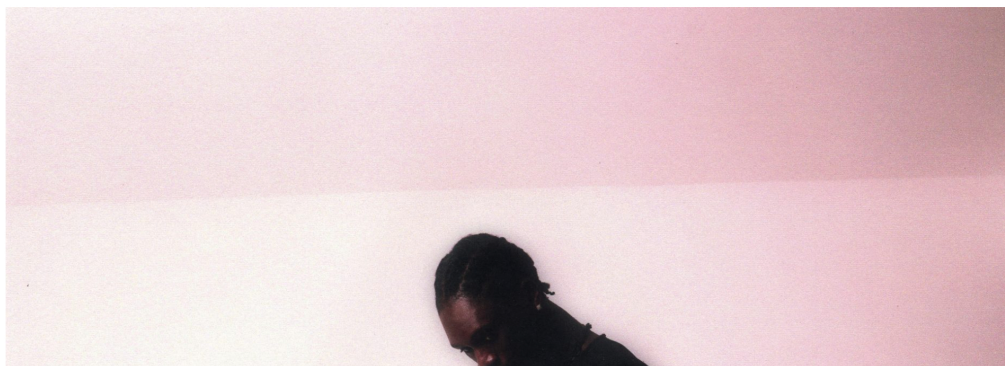
by [Alex Brzezicka](#)

From turning heads on the runway to ruling the charts, Jnr Choi made it 'TO THE MOON' and stayed true to himself on the way.

"We're not trying to make hits. We don't do that. We're making music," says 24-year model-turn-rapper Jnr Choi. Sometimes the labour of our hearts has side effects. In the case of the young musician, whose single 'TO THE MOON' went viral overnight on TikTok, the effects were Earth-shattering. From days staring at an empty calendar, he went to one of the busiest newcomers in the industry. With the always surprising algorithm of social media apps and a certain amount of luck needed to get through the glass ceiling, there's usually element of randomness. Not for Jnr Choi: if his name wasn't written in the stars back then, he did everything he could do to put it there. And it was worth it.

Jnr Choi's story starts as a teenager who wanted to make it in the fashion world and met rejection by every agency that he originally went to. Having faced that, in a Gatsby-like manner, he didn't take no for an answer and, motivated by the refusal, started to work on himself. "When I think about it, it sounds quite surreal. It was really a mindset. I never had anything to think about like that before. After I put my mindset to it, I was like, 'I'm gonna make sure I'm fit and ready, make my skin pure,'" Jnr Choi says. After that, it was only a matter of time before he got scouted in Topman in 2015: "Now, I'd be like 'how I'm gonna be the best model version of myself that I can get to? How would I be the best in this industry?' It's another one of those things that no one teaches you anything. You have to figure it out as you go along," the artist muses.

From casting to casting, he started understanding the rules which eventually landed him jobs for the likes of Issey Miyake, Givenchy and Lanvin. "I kept my own thing going on. I bumped into one of my friends early on and that solidified that mindset for me", Jnr Choi confides, "Everyone would be coming in black shirts and skinny jeans, and he came in a Supreme tracksuit. He was booking everything. Him being himself was what caught the attention of the casting directors."





Following the dogma of being unapologetically yourself 24/7, Jnr Choi's advice on navigating the world of cool and class is simple. "Sticking to myself. Making sure that every room that I walked in, you wanna feel my energy and when I leave you wanna remember my name", he says. "You come to understand that the world isn't that deep. You meet so many of those designers and you think that they would be a certain way when they're the chilliest people in the world," he says.

Jnr Choi quickly realised that everybody has to hustle in one way or another, and not let it overtake them. Born in London but of Gambian heritage, visiting the homeland of his mother gave him clarity: "They have less and even though they have less they are happier. That just spoke to me because I'm in London stressing out when they would do anything to come to London. I thought I need to appreciate being in London right now". So, ever since he made the best of it.





Following suggestions of his friends – “You should make music. You look like a rapper” – Jnr Choi decided to give it a go and let it take over him. “This is something I fell in love with, the process of creating, being able to put it out in the world. It was like a video game,” he says. The new goal was the ultimate freedom of expression, he came up with a strategy on how to nail it: “I learnt that I don’t need to be sending my stuff out to be getting mixed. The sound that I wanted to project is the one that I’m engineering myself and no one can tap in my brain and hear how I want it to sound,” he says, “I’m doing a whole new thing. I’m creating a whole new thing”. To fulfil his vision, Jnr Choi got down to studying, from analysing interviews to teaching himself the ropes of engineering and recording. “I had to travel from Essex to stay at my nan’s flat and sleep on a single bed. I barely saw her. I would go to her, say hi, grab food, go to the studio, come back at 8 am, sleep, wake up and do the same thing again. I did that for about 2 months,” he recalls.

Already prepared for the harsh reality of the creative industry, he stayed true to who he is and to his mission. “When I had the idea that I want to take my music international and make it universal, that was a big part of how I make music: I make music so everyone can understand me,” Jnr Choi says. Even though inspired by alternative rap stars like Travis Scott, Trippie Redd, Playboi Carti or Lancey Foux, he says in his own lane. Coming from a fashion background, he started to make music for seasons, like designers created collections. That’s how his Afro R&B EP *SS21* was born. “I don’t listen to the same kind of music in summer as I do in winter. In the summer we’re at the park, at the beach. We’re chilling. I wanna hear stuff that’s light-hearted,” he adds, “R&B stuff is cool to perform but it’s more mic-stand and central where I’m more like I want to be jumping around and getting lit with the crowd,” he says.





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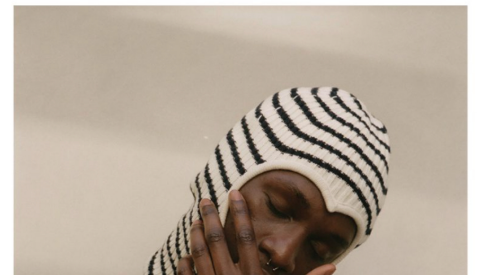
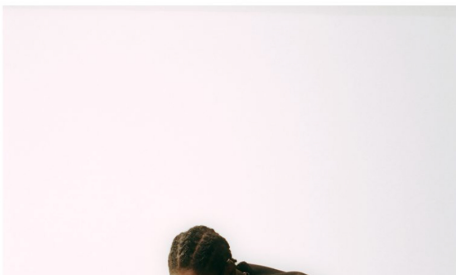


'TO THE MOON', a track that samples British singer-songwriter Sam Tompkins came from that mindset and quickly got named a new genre, Afro-drill. "I never really approach drill. I didn't like touching drill because it is a genre of music that carries a lot more than just beat," Jnr says, "The lyrics, they're talking about the streets, talking about the life we're living and the violence. I'm out here: in a penthouse. I'm not relating to that. I didn't want to approach and talk about the life I'm not living". Instead, he picked the genre apart he applied it in the form of "luxury drill".

Even though it's been in preparation for a while, the success of his experimentation shook him. "I had to sit back, really learn and absorb everything that was happening, going on but also still be that prepared person when it comes to it". Forced on the face-paced track, Jnr Choi doesn't take long to rest. He was cut out for it. "I'm making music. I'm locked in. I'm saying to myself, I want to do this internationally. I'm going forward. I'm keeping that mindset. I'm inspired by such as Lancey who kept true to himself and continue on his road. There was 5% at the back of the head saying, 'this could flop'. This year put me back in that reassurance". Jnr Choi already took us to the moon and that's the beginning. There are galaxies ahead. A little alien told us that there's a new project that might be landing on your streaming platforms this later year.



“THAT’S MY FORMULA: JUST MAKE MUSIC. MAKE, MAKE, MAKE, MAKE. DON’T THINK TOO MUCH.”





Starting out as a solo player Jnr Choi has now two managers and a team under him that he learns to understand and lead. From being a character in someone else's fashion shows, he's risen to be a mastermind of his own. It promises a good time in the company of an easy-going genius. Though his eyes always stay on the prize, his dream is detached from the material realm. It lives in the made-up creative land, somewhere between London, US and Gambia, where simple things matter the most. "I want to just release great music. I want fans to appreciate it, to have us on the same page and enjoy it together. I'm really just looking to a life with my fans," Jnr Choi reveals, "I'm embracing it".

*Press play on Jnr Choi's video for 'TICK TOCK' below now...*



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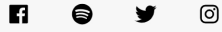
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