

SUBSCRIBE NOW and get 3 MONTHS for the PRICE OF 1 SUBSCRIBE NOW

Subscribe | Log In

U.S. EDITION Tuesday, February 26, 2013 As of 10:19 PM EST

Home World U.S. New York Business Tech Markets Market Data Opinion Life & Culture Real Estate Management

News Sports Culture Real Estate

TOP STORIES IN NEW YORK



Met Maestro Marks Return In Small Steps

1 of 12



Campaigns Woo Latinos

2 of 12



Housing Signals Mixed

3 of 12



2009 Election Probe Emerges Again

NY CULTURE | February 26, 2013, 10:19 p.m. ET

# Hearing (Sexy) Voices

With a New Album and a New Psychology Degree, a Singer Projects His 'Anxiety'

Article

Comments

MORE IN NEW YORK-CULTURE »

Email

Print

By ANDY BATTAGLIA

In the incubating glow of a Greenpoint recording studio recently, Arthur Ashin—the one-man electronic R&B act known as Autre Ne Veut—calmly considered a condition that has left him more than a little conflicted: anxiety.



"I'm not good at interacting with people and am terrified to get onstage, so I just go up there, freak out and, most of the time, pack up and go home immediately after," he said. "The bulk of any audience I've ever had has its head cocked to the side and looks at me like, 'What the f— is this guy doing?'"

With the prospect of more expectant audiences on the rise, he's still trying to work that out himself, musically and otherwise. As Autre Ne Veut (which translates from French as "I want no other."), Mr. Ashin has made advances that are both epochal and unique—especially on his vocally exertive, synthesizer-streaked second album, "Anxiety," parts of which he will perform Wednesday night at Santos Party House in lower Manhattan.

As a more ordinary 30-year-old trying to make his way in the world, he has progressed as well, having recently earned a master's degree in psychology, with a focus in neuroscience research, from Columbia University.



Enlarge Image

Jody Rogac

Arthur Ashin, aka Autre Ne Veut, has a masters degree in psychology

Since graduating last May, Mr. Ashin has devoted his time to music, but his

field of study is never very far from his art. "As I was writing, it felt like all the songs

WSJ SELEC LUXURY SHOPPING FOR THE SOPHISTICATED READER SHOP NOW OPERATED INDEPENDENTLY OF THE WALL STREET JOURNAL NEWS DEPARTMENT

Available to WSJ.com Subscribers

Bernanke Affirms Bond Buying



Builders Fuel Home Sale Rise

New Attack on TV 'Bundles'

J.P. Morgan to Cut 17,000 Jobs



GET 3 MONTHS FOR THE PRICE OF 1 SUBSCRIBE NOW

Don't Miss

[?]

were about my social anxiety, relationship anxiety, anxiety about my family," he said. "I've never been to a psychiatrist so have never gotten to the point where I could be formally diagnosed with any disorder. But I definitely have anxiety."

Some of his anxiousness materializes in *Autre Ne Veut's* densely and manically layered electronic sound, which melds a pop-song purity of purpose to a futuristic sense of all-over abstraction. But even more of it finds form in his wildly expressionistic singing, which sounds far more brazen and gregarious than Mr. Ashin's shy demeanor suggests.

"I've always loved singing and the catharsis of it," he said of his vocal style, which conveys an evocative mix of anguish and euphoria. "I spent a long part of my childhood repressing my more animalistic desire systems, and in a way it permits me to do some of the stuff that I would want to be doing in a way that's more comfortable and doesn't break my internal rules. It expands the realm of possibility."

That expansion makes room for divergent states of mind. A new song, the deceptively melodic and bright pop gambit "Play By Play," came to Mr. Ashin as a "meditation on being paranoid and jealous." Others attend simpler conditions, as when he lays his voice into outlandishly passionate praise of "your sexy body" on "Ego Free Sex Free."

The latter song signals *Autre Ne Veut's* allegiance to R&B, a genre well-versed in erotic endeavors. The same could not be said of the indie-music realm that Mr. Ashin has come to inhabit, though that is changing thanks to such cross-format incursions by R&B acts as the Weeknd, Frank Ocean, Miguel, whose songs have found favor among indie fans who identify with less pop-minded pursuits. Though less likely to steam up a boudoir, *Autre Ne Veut's* suggestive sound and libidinous vocal writhings flow the other way, from the cloistered indie underground to the more aspirational realm of pop.

"In the early 2000s in New York, there was a paradigm shift around the idea of being able to create your own mixed bag from whatever you love and creating a new blueprint with reconfigured pieces from other traditions," Mr. Ashin said. "I was listening to a lot of soul and reggae and music that wasn't necessarily being repurposed in that way. There was 'freak-folk,' so I was like, 'Why not freak-R&B?'"

*Autre Ne Veut's* style proves especially potent for its visceral assimilation of the passion and pathos at work in R&B through the ages.

"I don't think I would have really thought about how good an Otis Redding record was, or is, unless I heard it through his ears," said Daniel Lopatin, a Brooklyn musician who makes synthesizer music under the name Oneohtrix Point Never. A friend since their undergraduate years at Hampshire College, Mr. Lopatin helped Mr. Ashin produce "Anxiety" in the Greenpoint studio, then released it on his own label, Software. "There's a rawness to what he does and the ways you can catch ideas within the smear of it."

About the intensity of his work, Mr. Ashin, as an artist and a decorated appraiser of the mind—even if his current plans do not include a career in psychology—concurred: "I would call it all part of my nature but definitely, generally speaking, a repressed part. That's a function of this project for me: having a space for catharsis."

*A version of this article appeared February 27, 2013, on page A21 in the U.S. edition of The Wall Street Journal, with the headline: Hearing (Sexy) Voices.*



CEO to France: 'How Stupid Do You Think We Are?'



War of Words Between Japan, Russia



Mindy McCready Dies in Apparent Suicide

## Most Popular

Read Emailed Video Commented

1. [New Spate of Acrimony in Congress as Cuts Loom](#)
2. [Internet Gambling Scores Its Biggest Win](#)
3. [Opinion: Phil Gramm: Obama and the Sequester Scare](#)
4. [Hagel Is Confirmed as Defense Secretary](#)
5. [Opinion: Rich Karlgaard: Wal-Mart's Sales Problem—And America's](#)

Real-t / York

### In Cannibal Plot Case, FBI Agent Reads NYPD Officer's Online Chats

On the second day of a kidnapping-conspiracy trial, prosecutors used a New York City police officer's own words to detail his alleged plots they contend were motivated by cannibalistic desires.



### Fairway Details Losses From Superstorm

Fairway Group, the New York-centric grocery store operator, has seen its current fiscal year's loss soar following damage from last October's Superstorm Sandy.



### Weather Journal: Rest of Week Marked by Rain, Wind

### Friend Didn't Believe Warning in Cannibal-Plot Case

### Federal Regulators Halt Fung Wah Fleet

See All  
RSS Feed

## More in New York-Culture

[Met Maestro Marks Return In Small Steps](#)

## Getting Around Greater New York

### Starting Address

OR Intersection or Popular Restaurant/Place

### Destination Address

OR Intersection or Popular Restaurant/Place

## Related Topics

Broadway Shows  
Lincoln Center  
Metropolitan Opera

NY Philharmonic  
American Ballet Theater  
Museum of Modern Art

JOIN THE DISCUSSION  
Be the first to comment

MORE IN  
New York-Culture »

Email

Print

Order Reprints