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As told to Margaret Farrell , 2598 words.

Tags: Music, Collaboration, Process, Money.

On being receptive to your vulnerability

Producer and performing artist Ourielle Auvé (Ouri) discusses why creativity is always there, reframing failure, learning to let go, and breaking your routine in order to stay inspired.

Do you have a specific schedule for creating? How do you motivate yourself and structure your time?

I love to have a very regular routine where I don't have a lot of social interactions when I'm creating. I did weeks where I was waking up at 5am and meeting with people I was working with. We would hide our phones and only cook and prepare everything ourselves all the time. And we became super close during the process, and it was nice to be extremely vulnerable in front of each other.

Or when I'm alone. It's like that, too. I isolate myself in a city I don't know. Sometimes I make sure that I cannot be a good friend or anything. I love my friends, but sometimes it takes your attention. And I want to put everything in the music. So it's nice to isolate.

Are there certain times of the day you work best? Do you prefer the mornings?

At the beginning, when I'm really starting to create—when it's tiny, tiny—it can be either the morning or the late night. But it's a moment when I know that everyone in the city is mostly asleep. I don't know why. It secures me. No one can hear or can receive this idea because I'm the only one awake.

It's yours to contain. How did you come across that and figure out that that's something important to you?

I think it started when I started making music, I really didn't have a lot of money, and I'm still not very rich, but I knew that people were having grants to make retreats. And because of my immigration status, I could not ask for grants. So I was like, I'm gonna make myself a retreat.

When I was a kid, my parents were very much into religious groups, if not sects, stuff that I don't follow as an adult, but it taught me a lot of discipline. And we would go to this Buddhist retreat. In the morning, we would wake up at six; my sister and I were nine and seven. We do some yoga in the forest and then prepare some food and then do meditation. So it's this rhythm that I knew was kind of helpful to focus, even though as a child, it was difficult. It's still an inspiration, in a way.

Do you ever have moments where everything is set up, you have your schedule or your plan for the day, and you're not in the mood. How do you combat that instinct?

First, I need to be vulnerable enough that I hear this instinct, and I accept it. Because sometimes you're like, 'No, I'm a great musician. I do not have writer's block.' But you know you do. [laughs] Then you need to fucking be grateful for what's happening to you in the studio. You're surrounded with things that you love and maybe you're focusing on the wrong thing at this moment. There's always a place to be creative. You have to find it. Life is not going to present to you in a little silver box. So you have to look for it differently. This means that you have to stop being so sure of what you're doing at the moment.

Like reframing your thoughts.

Maybe you need to show your music to friends. You need to stop this routine that you have established—not stopping but, integrating something else.

I would love to hear about how, from the beginning as a musician until now, you balanced your creative life and life outside of music. Are you a full time musician?

I'm a full time musician. When I started making music, I did not dream of living off of music, because I didn't believe it was possible. And then I started to have little contracts, and then I was organizing myself to live with this money, and now I have bigger opportunities that pay for things. It was a slow but smooth, continuous process into financial security in music.

But to balance creative life and real life, it's not always easy. I'm very solitary. So I need to have friends that understand this. My partner understands that too, and he needs a lot of alone time to work. Or find people that you can work in closed rooms and you know that they're not going to disturb you all the time. You need to definitely find a group of people who are not going to be pissed off by this.
[laughs]

Is that something that you communicate outright or is it something that you can sense, after hanging out with friends or collaborating with them, that they understand?

I think most musicians understand. Sometimes they don't and they want more attention. You can't give it to them, but they can still feel your love. So they know that you're not dissing them, you're just not available at the moment. And some people are extremely productive, but they're not necessarily extremely in touch with their emotions or the way they want to handle their career. Sometimes you need breaks and stuff, and people who are a bit slower in their process, usually they respect the pace of other people around them.

Having extremely productive people next to me, it makes me want to be more vulnerable, but also strong and not hide myself when I feel vulnerable. I don't have to take everything personally. It's difficult too; you want to be inspired, you want to receive any information or feeling that presents itself. But you don't want to be affected by everything too.

It's interesting that you've brought up vulnerability a lot. What does that mean to you?

By vulnerability, it's recognizing a feeling and then transforming it into music. Sometimes it's the tiniest details that make the way you express your experience really personal, or really playful, or you really add your character to what you're making. So I feel it's a state of receptivity, like extreme versatility. And also expressing these tiny details. If you're with people who are, or if you yourself are in a place where you're super judgmental, you're not going to appreciate everything, you're going to cut all the details. Sometimes it's important because you can get attached to the stupidest things and you need to let go. But when you start you need to really receive everything. It's tough. When you're in the studio you don't want to be with people who are laughing at you or making jokes all the time. You need to be serious, but not too serious at the same time, like being extremely light and communicating everything at every moment.

Have you ever had that experience where maybe you're not vibing with someone in the studio or a collaboration isn't going as you expected?

Yes, sometimes. Sometimes it's better to work with a bit more distance with people you love. I remember being this person when I was younger, we're working with a rapper and I really didn't like his rap but instead of being respectful about it, my friends were laughing and I was smiling in a corner. It was not very nice. I would not do that again.

You would not act that way?

You need to understand that even though you're a musician, you probably don't have the tools to appreciate everything or guide everyone and their music. Sometimes you just shut up. You don't even give your opinion. You have to know when it's really welcome and when it's going to bring something positive to the table.

How do you find that balance, when you're working with someone, and you love something so much about whatever you're creating in that moment and maybe they don't. I'm interested in how you approach your collaborations and how you find that balance between two or more people.

During collaborations, our spaces overlap, and there's like a clear zone where we have common taste. And we know exactly what we love from the other person that we cannot absolutely reach. So I feel like compromises are easy. We never fight for ideas. Sometimes I know that it's a bad idea and in this collaboration, we should just let go of this. And sometimes I need to argue a little bit to make sure that the person understands what you're going for. If it still doesn't work out, I don't want to force something on them. You need to find ways to present your ideas so they're so sexy no one can resist, but also you need to accept that you can't please everyone.

With your latest album *Frame of a Fauna*, it was influenced by moments of both birth and death. How do you compose yourself when you're creating alongside intense moments? How do you channel that energy while also balancing a sense of vulnerability?

It's therapeutic and when you live something hard, I don't like to talk about it over and over with my friends. I love to make a song about this and put all the little details so it exists somewhere. I know that I've said and I can turn the page. That's what is beautiful about music: You can talk about the

smallest moments or the biggest events in your life and turn them into something artistic. You can also turn something that never happened to you into a song. You can really decide anything.

It seems like you're a very open and empathic person, I'm curious how you find that balance in protecting yourself, respecting the sensitive moments versus creating something that involves every ounce of yourself. Has it ever been too much or overwhelming?

I don't feel like it's very difficult to put things in music for me. But I'm still pushing myself to be more open and show myself more in the music. Because I'm an empath, I do have issues with boundaries, and protecting myself in general. And at the beginning, I was super distant in my music. Now I want to be more open in my music, but more distant in the real world. Sometimes in collaboration, I really want people to feel good and express themselves and everything, but I forget that I also need to feel very grounded, and good to be able to give the best of myself.

What happens when you reach a roadblock or are approaching burnout?

This happened to me a lot in the last year. I would go into a completely different mode. I feel lucky, because I can do many different things in music. So if I'm supposed to finish my album and I have no juice anymore, I just take a break—a complete break—and I work on another project that involves a completely different energy, or I go back to DJing or, I go back to another practice musically, that's gonna inspire me and bring back some life inside.

This is the big lesson that I learned. When you are pushing yourself too much, you need to really stop. You need to rest and be okay with doing nothing for a while. Then you come back and everything is so much clearer. There's no ambiguity about taking decisions and cutting things off.

How do you deal with failure?

That notion of failure is definitely extremely hard to accept. And it happens. But it always happens to the project that you know you should have never said yes. You still did because you adored the person or you really like their project but you're not the right person and you still did it. Then it leads to failure. I feel like there's this romanticized version of failure that is like fate—it's not a failure, you are a failure. This gets stressful and difficult. But we all make mistakes; we all do things that go nowhere and we need to accept it.

I try to always finish everything that I started, but lately I have accepted so many things that I could not finish that I was having multiple burnouts after each other, and not being able to finish projects, having to say no to things that I adore. I was like, "okay, that doesn't work." Or, believing so much in a song and you working on it, you're working on it, you're working on it, and then you stop. It doesn't go anywhere. And then the next day, you make a song in one day. And you're like, 'Okay, so I just need to stop working on that.' I feel like failure is always linked to your ego getting all wrapped up in something, and you get carried away in a shitty path for too long.

Do you have a routine for when that happens to you?

I try to have a sense of knowing when it's not gonna go any further. I'm trying to be better at this. But you never know. Sometimes you work super long for so much time and finally, it goes somewhere. Sometimes it takes one second and it's like the best. You need to be supple and stay happy and grateful.

Sometimes I don't know if I'm allowed to say this, but I feel like psychedelics help, because they help detach from this sense of self. You just think about the music and having fun, which is what creating is about for me.

I'm curious what your first psychedelic experience was like.

It was insane. It was with a friend of mine and we rented a studio for a week. It was our first time taking acid and doing music at the same time. And it was my first time on acid. And I'm so scared with drugs that I really took a super small amount. But it was insane. We were just jumping from place to place in this studio exchanging roles. And we're having so much fun, and we're talking through the music. We weren't talking about us. We were taking breaks and listening to music on an insane sound system. My whole body was like exploding, I don't know how to describe it.

So I felt that it was possible to be free in the music and deliver something nice that you don't need to be a scholar about the way you produce or like to create music. You need to be truly connected to yourself and then it's going to be amazing, that's gonna take a lot of time. You can take psychedelics or you can also go on vacation. You can do self-care. There's so many ways to connect with yourself. But this one was pretty fun, I have to admit.

What advice would you have for someone that feels disconnected from themselves at the moment?

To stop everything that they're doing and close their eyes and breathe, first. Not force anything, but breathe a little bit. Also, journaling helps a lot. My privacy was violated a lot so it's nice to have a journal with security so you can write the worst things and they're outside. Then, you can go on with your life with other ideas. You can take things out and watch them and realize that it's not you, it's just a thought.

Ouri Recommends:

Peach black bubble tea with tapioca

Military schedules (sometimes) / Doing nothing (few days a year)

Princess Mononoke

Jaco Pastorius

Bathing naked in the ocean

Name


Ourielle Auvé


Vocation


producer, DJ, performing artist, and composer

Fact

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