

THIS PAGE: ASOS DESIGN SUPER SKINNY SUIT JACKET IN ICE BLUE £70; ASOS WHITE LOOSE-FIT HEAVYWEIGHT T-SHIRT IN WHITE £14

OPPOSITE: NIKE TRACK JACKET IN BLACK £85; NIKE TRACKPANTS IN BLACK £70; T-SHIRT [as above]

MY STYLE: AJ TRACEY

THE MC AND PRODUCER TALKS DRAKE DMS, MENTAL HEALTH AND EMBRACING HIS FLAWS

Describe your style 'West London. If I'm moody, which is 90 per cent of the time, I just wear black. If I'm not, a little bit of colour in there. I've got a pink Gucci jumper with a little piggy on it. I like the Biggie Smalls-style jumper [p.52]. I'd wear that to my nan's house.'

Does it change on and off stage? 'If I'm performing I'm trying to embody a rock star. Ripped jeans, buckled Gucci boots, black Louis [Vuitton] bracelets. If I'm in the ends, a tracksuit, a black coat, some [Nike] Air Forces. If I'm turning up somewhere, a polo. If I'm going to a football match, Stone Island everything with the Spurs scarf I got from White Hart Lane the day it closed.'

What does your heart chain represent? 'Love is the main thing in life and it's my first ever chain. My jeweller's [Seattle Gold, Giggs' brother] female assistant was like, "I don't see many men buy that kind of jewellery." I was like, "Yeah, it's fire innit."

Talk us through your tattoos 'The "M" on my hand is "Majin" from *Dragon Ball Z* – this symbol means [someone is] unruly, they do what they want. I put it on my hand to show I do what I want. On my arm I've got flames, a Tottenham Hotspur emblem – my dad's team and mine – and a tattoo that says, "Ma familia primero" which means "family first" in Spanish.'

What's your trainer vibe? 'The only person I know who has more trainers than me is [DJ] Charlie Sloth. I have, like, 150 pairs in my mum's attic and 200 in my house. Air Force 1 is obviously the mandem creps.'

Grooming and hair essentials 'Razac cream, Palmer's Cocoa Butter, Blistex lip balm. I've got every Chanel spray – I like Chanel Homme Sport best. I'll use conditioner but not shampoo every time cos my hair will start locking up. I like it to be a bit locked so the volume's heavy. Also, hair mayonnaise, sometimes, and coconut oil.'

You're an animal lover? 'I love animals more than humans. I want a dog but I can't get one yet because I'm on tour. I wanted to rent a goat for my album cover shoot but I couldn't rent them, I had to buy them. I ended up buying two cos the guy said one would get lonely on its own! So I bought two and donated them to a farm.'

Tell us about the album 'Got some country music on there, a US feature with one of my boys. That's my favourite and both of us fuck it up. I got a garage tune as well.'

Creative influences 'When I'm going to do something, I think, "Would my mum be OK with this?" If the answer is no, I won't do it. Country music has some of the best lyricism in the world – Billy Ray Cyrus, Dolly Parton.'

How do mentors help you? 'Skepta gives me good advice, Stormzy gives me the best advice I've ever had. With the whole "being independent" thing, he's been there so he tells me how to deal with it all.'

Best DM you've received 'Drake. He said, "Yo bruda, you're a bad MC. I heard your *Fire In The Booth*. You're killing it. Link up soon." I replied, "Boom when are you gonna be about?" He told me when, he came and he linked me.'

How do you handle negative online comments? 'I reply with something positive to uplift it. If it's horrible, like attacking my family, I'll ignore it.'

Career highlight 'Being able to pay my mum's rent and getting a gold plaque.'

When you're not making music or watching football you're... 'Playing games. Fortnite, FIFA, Red Dead Redemption, Monopoly and Super Smash Bros.'

What topics are you most passionate about? 'The Labour party, Grenfell Tower and mental health. I have depression and anxiety, so I speak about it. When people

know how you feel, they can help you feel better. Grenfell Tower is my area and my friends passed away in the fire. If you see anything to do with Grenfell, buy into it. Don't let people forget.'

How's your physical health? 'I've got a little belly, I like it. It's good to stay healthy, I'm not encouraging the dad bod phenomenon – I have a dad bod – but I'm proud that my body represents that I'm doing well.'

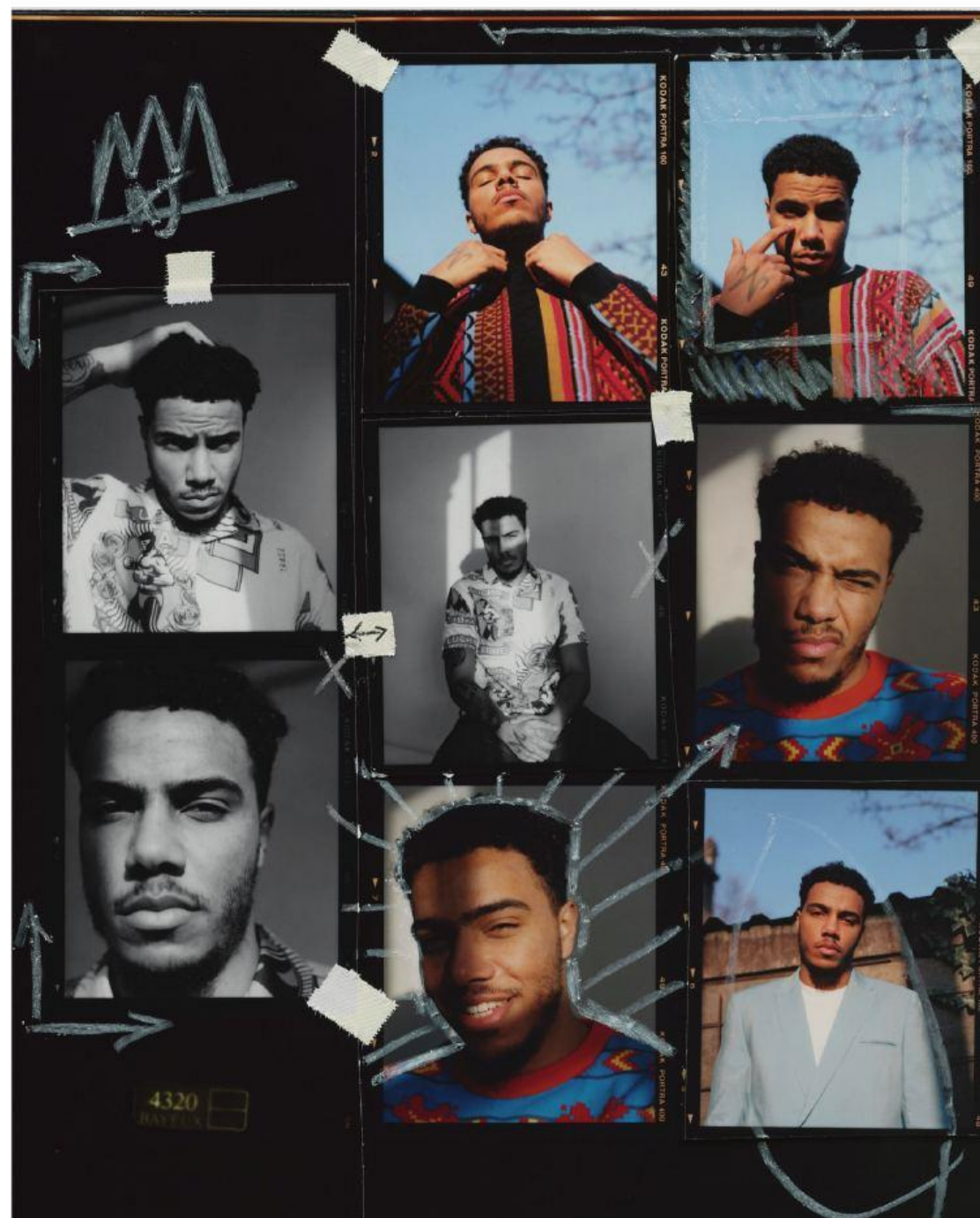
Hopes for UK music 'That every type of music can come up in its own right. Shout-outs to Octavian and Yung Fume for not following trends, they inspire me. Lancey Foux, too. Talented women are getting recognition – Mabel, Raye, Ray BLK, Jorja Smith, Mahalia, M.O. Dua Lipa is bae.'

New skill to learn 'To sing better. I've learnt a couple of melodies from Not3s and I'm way better than *Butterflies* on my album. There's a wrong note on *Butterflies* I left in on purpose so you can see it's me.'

Future goals 'To double 2018's 97 million Spotify streams, next to no features, more plaques, more life, more energy.'

• AJ's self-titled album is out now; @ajtracey





THIS PAGE: ASOS DESIGN KNITTED STRIPE FAIR ISLE JUMPER IN RED £30; ASOS DESIGN JUMPER IN FLORAL MIX £25; ASOS DESIGN OVERSIZED MIX AND MATCH CONVERSATIONAL PRINT SHIRT £28; ASOS DESIGN SUPER SKINNY SUIT JACKET IN ICE BLUE £70; ASOS WHITE LOOSE-FIT HEAVYWEIGHT T-SHIRT IN WHITE £14 OPPOSITE: ASOS DESIGN OVERSIZED MIX AND MATCH CONVERSATIONAL PRINT SHIRT £28; ASOS DESIGN TAPERED SMART TROUSERS IN RED £20; ASOS DESIGN SOCKS [pack of 5] £10; CLARKS ORIGINALS DESERT TREK BOOTS IN OAK SUEDE £120

