

GODDESS OF GOTH

Fashion renegade and DJ Venus X is charting a new model for creative output that started with GHE2OGOTH1K, her marauding dance party.

BY JASMIN HERNANDEZ PORTRAIT BY DICKO CHAN

“I’m not looking at other pop stars

when I think about my ideas or what I believe in or what set I’m going to play. I’m creating my own world,” Venus X proclaims on a Friday afternoon in early October. The founder of the roving, iconic New York underground dance party GHE2OGOTH1K, which has brought queer, black and brown folks to soul search on the dancefloor under innovative DJs for nearly a decade, the 32-year-old is a cultural connector. The diversity of blackness, beyond rap music, is celebrated full-on at GHE2OGOTH1K. “We have a lot of systematically programmed ways of assuming people will be, so there were always these questions about who could be goth. Are Latinos allowed to be goth? Are black people allowed to be goth? Are they inherently goth because of their trajectory as oppressed, marginalized, people?” Venus X conceived of the GHE2OGOTH1K universe in 2009 with early collaborator and Hood By Air cofounder Shayne Oliver, breathing life into New York’s bland, corporate and fading nightlife scene of the 2010s.

With Latinx roots, Venus X was born Jazmin Venus Soto in Washington Heights to a Dominican mother and an Ecuadorian father. Nightlife was in her career DNA early on. She worked at the 40/40 Club before a friend offered her a monthly night at a Brooklyn bar which quickly metamorphosized into GHE2OGOTH1K. The musical genesis of the party initially consisted of goth, punk and dark hip-hop and now includes juke, dembow and house.

GHE2OGOTH1K’s extended family of DJs, like Physical Therapy, Kingdom, Total Freedom and Mike Q, played a myriad of sonic sensations for audiences, complemented by Venus X’s chopping of Aaliyah, Siouxi Sioux, ballroom beats and reggaeton. Then the celebrities—like Alexander Wang, Diplo, and M.I.A. (Venus X opened for M.I.A.’s Matangi 2013–14 tour)—started to come, and other stars appropriated the party’s aesthetic.

GHE2OGOTH1K turns 10 in 2019 and has already garnered Venus X global visibility, yet she still navigates shrewdly and independently with recent projects, including spinning for Dior and Versace, curating the 2017–18 lineup for MoMA PS1’s Warm Up festival and designing a Nike Air Max sneaker. “When we started, there wasn’t really the intention to be musicians and have fame. We were creating a community where we made sense to one another. We didn’t want to become mainstream, but we wanted our ideas to become mainstream, our craziness. Even though we’re not super famous, it’s obvious we’ve had an impact and people know we exist.”

“GHE2OGOTH1K created and owned its own sound,” says fashion designer Telfar Clemens, a contributor to the party’s ecosystem. “In the early days of GHE2OGOTH1K Venus X, Shayne Oliver and Daniel Fisher had a special way of mixing music of all genres to create a new sound that attracted a new atmosphere in New York club culture. GHE2OGOTH1K influenced popular music, high

fashion and lifestyle specific to New York City.”

Other pillars in the GHE2OGOTH1K cosmos include the Planet X boutique, which is still going strong after two pop-up locations in Bushwick and Chinatown. “I learned a lot about retail and having a brick-and-mortar location,” Venus X shares. “Now that we’re constantly evolving and the location of the store is meant to be transient, that’s kind of like how I am.” More pop-ups, a website and a new location are in the works. Venus X established GHE2OGOTH1K Records in 2016, releasing LSDXOXO’s *Fuck Marry Kill*, but is taking a pause to reconsider its approach because, as Venus X explains, “There’s infrastructure you have to build in order to do that the right way. For me, as a young woman of color, there is really no mentor or guidebook that I can refer to.”

As we conclude our conversation, Venus X has a packed weekend ahead. In a few hours she’ll be spinning at Schimanski in Williamsburg, alongside core peers like Asmara and Byrell the Great. Two days later, she’s the headline DJ on the main stage at the inaugural Hypefest, Hypebeast’s festival of ideas, music and culture. “We’re almost going to be 10 years old, this is our ninth year. We have to organize. It’s all within reach. I think natural evolution is better than forced evolution.”

With Venus X at the helm, GHE2OGOTH1K’s creative rebellion has kept the grit of New York intact in the midst of the faux Instagram reality we’re steeped in.



MAKEUP BY MICHELLE BOSCH/MIAMI BY SUSY

Venus X wears a Poche Hat. The DJ and cultural connector is bringing her dance party to the next level, with a pop-up boutique and a record label in the works.