

Q: Who is COSMÓ?

C: He hasn't been on this planet for a long time. It started a little bit before "Vienna Calling" (*this year's National Selection show*) when I came up with a new artist persona. It started last summer when I decided to switch to German because before I was doing English music and I thought: Okay this is like a whole new style, I need a new persona, I need a new name and everything. And that's how COSMÓ was born.

Q: What's the story behind your artist's name COSMÓ?

C: COSMÓ it short for cosmopolitan and it's because of my heritage. I was born in Budapest, my mother is from Budapest and when I was two years old we moved to Austria to Burgenland. My dad is from Germany. I was raised in Austria and I feel like Austria is my home. But I also have influence from two other countries and I think that's also kind of my way of seeing things in this world. That we're all cosmopolitans and we can see over boundaries.

Q: You're only 19 years old, but you've already had quite a journey from casting shows to releasing your own music. So, when did you first realize that music was what you really wanted to do?

C: It's just always there, you know, also when I am at university, when I'm like... There's a seminar about, I don't know, microbiology or something it's always in the back of my mind. And also I can't help it, when I get an idea I have to write it down because otherwise it gets lost and then I regret that. So, I just do my day to day things and music just comes to me and I have to write it down.

Q: You also have a very recognizable look - the blue star in your face. How did that become your trademark and what does it represent?

C: There was no big master plan behind it all. It was more of a spontaneous idea shortly before the casting (*for "Vienna Calling", this year's National Selection show*). I thought COSMÓ needs this one last thing so that people know: that's COSMÓ. It was so hard to figure that out because there's so many things in this world. So what would pop out? I thought maybe if I drew something on my face and I thought a star would look really cool because I really like movies about galaxies and the universe. And that's why I thought a star would be cool. And my favorite color is blue.

Q: You'd be happy if your fans also draw a star in your face?

C: I would be really happy, that would be really, really cool.

Q: Let's talk about TANZSCHEIN. What is it about?

C: TANZSCHEIN translates to a dance licence, like a driver's licence for clubbing. The story behind it is that when I went out clubbing with friends for the first time, I had really high expectations. My mother always told me that people would be dressed really colorful and extravagant, music would be really cool and everyone would be dancing. It sounded really good. But unfortunately, it was more of a disappointment in the end because we went inside and everyone was dressed in black and was just standing around. It was kind of awkward. I thought: We need to change that. We need to focus more on the music, on dancing, on having a good time. And that's what TANZSCHEIN is all about. Just letting go and not caring about what people think about you. Just being yourself."

Q: How can people get this licence to dance?

C: Actually, they have to do the TANZSCHEIN challenge, which is the TANZSCHEIN dance. We have a little choreo. You might have seen it on social media, on my profile. And people can post a video with the TANZSCHEIN song in the background, do the TANZSCHEIN dance, and then on our merch website they can send in the video and get their personalized dance licence. I'm so happy we can do that because that was my dream and my vision for this song.

Q: And this little dance you mentioned, how did this come about?

C: I thought it would be cool if before "Vienna Calling" (*this year's National Selection show*) we could do videos with a choreo. The song is about dancing, so we need to have dancing on stage. And then I thought, maybe something that other people can also do. I was thinking about my mother because she always longs to just have a dance break and it was a Saturday night when I came up with this little choreo and I showed it to her and she was able to do the choreo as well. That's when I thought, okay, we can do this.

Q: If Mama COSMÓ can do it, everyone can do it.

C: She was falling asleep almost already, so I thought yeah okay that's good.

Q: How did the song actually come together? Who was involved writing and producing?

C: I had such a lovely time with these two people, Nono Punch, our producer, and Ella Stern, a wonderful singer and songwriter. It all went really fast. We had like one, two sessions. We had other songs, but I was focused on TANZSCHEIN. I couldn't focus on any other song. The song came to me when I was going for a run at the Prater in

Vienna. I just thought of this word TANZSCHEIN. And then I contacted Nono and was like: Man, I think this is the Eurovision song for "Vienna Calling". And they were really excited and hyped and it was just really cool. I love them.

Q: Eurovision songs often have this special kind of energy compared to, I say, regular songs. So what makes TANZSCHEIN a Eurovision song in your eyes?

C: The cool thing about Eurovision is: There are no boundaries music-wise. You can have a funky guitar in the second verse or an opera choir in the bridge. And people just say: Hey, that's cool, yeah, you can do this. And I find that really cool because regular music would be criticized. It would be like: Well, it doesn't fit in any box - how can we market that? For Eurovision, it was just like a breath of fresh air. And we were just able to do our thing. TANZSCHEIN is basically just a bunch of spontaneous, random ideas mashed together in this one song.

Q: I'd love to take a little closer look at the lyrics with you. In the bridge, you sing about a gorilla: I take him by the hand. We look into each other's eyes. Then you continue singing to the gorilla: You can trust me. Everything is allowed here. We've been hiding long enough. What is happening in that moment of the song? What does that part mean to you?

C: That's like the most crucial part in the song because it's like this change of mood. Because we're still in this club where everyone is lazy and doesn't want to dance at all. And the other gorillas are pressuring this gorilla not to dance. They don't accept him as he is. And so that's a really emotional part where in the story I kind of try to convince him to just let go. I pull him on the dance floor and we just let go of everything and just dance by ourselves.

Q: Some listeners might hear this as an encouragement of some sort of coming out, perhaps in a queer sense. Was that something you had in mind while writing? And how do you feel when people interpret it in that way?

C: If people would have a personal connection to this song, that would make me really, really happy. The song is just about being yourself as you are and dancing just like you are and dancing however you want.

Q: Many Eurovision entries switch to English for the contest, but you don't do that. You stay with German. Why is that important to you?

C: For my whole life I was listening to English music. It started out with "Mama mia", my mother showed me the musical so that I would learn English. But then last summer I was frustrated with English. I was like: It's not getting me anywhere. And then we switched to German. And it was kind of also this switch to: Okay maybe let's just make music however I feel right now. German is my mother tongue. I was able to

let go of all requirements that English pop rock - this one genre- should have. So German was for me like breaking free and it still feels like that. I feel very safe and well when I sing in German.

Q: Good, that's a good feeling. Once the song is out in the world, people of course have all sorts of opinions. How do you personally deal with criticism?

C: It's really cool that it reaches so many people that there are also people who don't like it. I think that's really really okay because I don't want to make a song that everyone likes. Because then it's – I don't know – a song like just a kick drum. There are always opinions, and I'm happy that people can express them. That's very important to me. For me, criticism is mostly online, and I don't really spend too much time online or on social media. And I only meet very lovely people in the reality. It brings me so much joy, so that's how I live with it.

Q: Let's talk about Eurovision itself. What does the Eurovision Song Contest mean to you personally?

C: Wow. Eurovision is – was – is such a dream. I don't know what it is right now because we're in this dream. It's just this really big celebration of music and love and unity. I'm so honored to be a part of this; to be representing Austria in this coming together of these cultures and languages and people. It's so fascinating how music can all connect us. And I mean also dancing because dancing is also this international language. So if we can achieve that with the TANZSCHEIN dance, I'd be really happy.

Q: Do you remember the first time you watched Eurovision?

C: Yes. The first time actually Austria won, so no pressure. I was eight years old. I watched as Conchita won Eurovision back then. It was a really, really cool feeling. It was so cool that I rebuilt her performance in Lego. So there's a video, I was filming that with my iPad, I think. And then there's "Rise Like a Phoenix" in the background. So I was really fascinated. I just thought it would be so cool to stand on a big stage like that. I always wondered what that kind of feeling is.

Q: Are there other Eurovision moments that stayed with you, maybe funny or unexpected or emotional?

C: I think I'd be really happy to try on Käärijä's jacket. I think that would be really cool because green is my second favorite color. I like the combination of blue and green. So that would be really cool. I see a lot of memes from Eurovision as well, so I'm really excited to see the memes of this year's Eurovision.

Q: You talked already about Conchita, but last year of course JJ won for Austria. How did you experience that moment when he was winning?

C: Wow. I was at my grandmother's in Budapest in her flat with my family. During the voting, my family was already asleep. I mean, it was really late, but I had a rush of adrenaline because the points were getting higher and there was like this possibility of Austria winning and it was: Ah! There was so much adrenaline. And then when they announced the final result, I was screaming. I didn't have any control over my body. It was just pure joy. And also this collective feeling of whole Austria being proud of JJ was so mesmerizing to experience that. That was a really cool moment.

Q: And you thought you want that too, so now it's your turn.

C: Yes! I was thinking: Bro, now it's in Wiener Stadthalle. It's so close to me. So I really wanted to be there.

Q: But how do you feel about that? Is it like, of course, extra responsibility to represent the host country, maybe pressure or an exciting opportunity to be directly in the final?

C: I mean, it would be a lot of pressure if I were to sing like JJ. Never in a million years would I be able to hit those high notes. But for me, I'm going to do my own thing. Like JJ did his thing, Conchita did her thing. And for me, my goal is to just to be COSMÓ and present what COSMÓ is. I'm actually really happy that it's in Vienna. I can take the tram. My family is close, my friends are close. That's really cool. I'm home and Eurovision is coming here. So it's like the perfect scenario for me.

Q: What's your goal for that Eurovision experience for you?

C: Well, definitely enjoying it, but also giving my best. I know sometimes it's not enjoyable, but I'd be willing to just take that and take every opportunity that is given to me. I think this is a very pivotal moment in my life career, if I can say that. I just want to take everything in and see what's gonna happen after that.

Q: Let's imagine it's the day after the final. I think it's 17th of May, right? So it's noon, you're a little bit tired, probably didn't sleep much. What would need to have happened for you that you can say, yes, that was a success?

C: The best feeling would be if I was lying in bed and just thinking: Wow, we gave it all. We were ourselves on this stage. We showed Europe and the world who we are and who COSMÓ is. And it would be cool if some people in Stadthalle do the TANZSCHEIN dance. That would be cool.

Q: And if you say we, you mean? Austria? You mean your team?

C: I mean the team. I mean, it's difficult because on stage it's just a small proportion of all the people that work on this project together with me. But my dear friend and manager Sandro will be there and it's like our baby, this project. But there's also so many people behind the scenes and I want to do all of them proud.

Q: Stepping back from Eurovision now for a moment, what kind of music do you listen to in your everyday life?

C: I'm a big fan of Billie Eilish. I think it's very inspiring, her way of making music and also how she started out. Because she started out with her brother in her bedroom and it was all do-it-yourself. But it was also really honest and authentic and I loved that about her. I was also inspired by her to make music on my laptop. For all of my songs, I would always start up demos on my laptop, it's just these random stupid ideas, just putting them into my laptop. And then my producer says: "Yeah, that's cool." And then we make a song out of that.

Q: Did you see Billie Eilish live?

C: No, unfortunately. It's so heartbreaking. But at least I'm in the venue where she played last year. That's cool. Maybe there's like, I don't know, a drop of confetti somewhere laying around from her show.

Q: What would you say which artists, beside Billie Eilish maybe, or songs are inspiring for you the most right now?

C: Especially Cro. Cro is this German rapper who's not just a musician but also an artist through and through. He has this amazing style and taste in music and design. I find that very inspiring. For me also Tame Impala. Because it's just so cool how everyone's like: What? That's one person doing all of that. That would be really cool just to like go away for two months and then on some island do an album or something. That's so nonchalant but it's really cool.

Q: Good. And finally, Eurovision can open a lot of doors for different kind of opportunities. What are your plans after the contest? What kind of music do you want to make?

C: I want to show different sides of COSMÓ as well. There will be more songs, I can say that, and I'm really hyped to show all of that. I want to meet fans after this whole experience as well. That would be really cool if people stayed even after this Eurovision journey. And we want to play shows, just do music and do our thing.

Q: That the Cosmopolitan stay with you. How do you call your fans?

C: The Cosmopolitans, yes.

Q: Thank you so much, COSMÓ.

C: Thank you.