

# REAL WILD CHILD

by Allison Moorer • photo by Emily Dorio

Musician Aaron Lee Tasjan wants to engage your eyes and ears



Aaron Lee Tasjan

**A**aron Lee Tasjan wants your full attention. And whether you're using your ears or your eyes, it's impossible not to notice the beauty that the offbeat Americana troubadour offers.

"I love giving people a reason to give me a second look," he says, "whether it's in music or what I'm wearing. I feel like we're all so prone to making snap judgements these days—I want to try to remind people that there's real beauty if you look again."

Aaron Lee is a gifted singer, songwriter, and musician, but he's also a man with an eye for sartorial detail—he deftly weaves an advanced amalgamation of styles to successfully carry out his high-on-life vision of himself and the world.

"I want to feel energy," he says. "I want to feel inspired. I want to feel like I've made a conscious decision to live in a skin that's as beautiful as I feel inside. I love life. I love being alive. Every day is an opportunity to become the person that I feel like I could be, and what I put on is a visual affirmation of these things and philosophies. It's setting an intention."

His debut record *In the Blazes*, was released in 2015, but he's been playing for much longer than that—notably as the guitarist for late-era New York Dolls. Throughout all that, he's remained committed to his unique aesthetic, whether that means he's haunting vintage stores while on the road looking for a "one-of-a-kind silk scarf with an amazing pattern on it, or fingerless polka-dot gloves,"

adding a yellow faux fur belt to a jeans-and-T-shirt ensemble to "instantly elevate it to a whole other level of outer space," or sewing giant sequins on a green thrift store suit to bring a vision for an album cover to life.

"For me," he explains, "it's inhabiting a character. The outfit is about bringing out the performer in the piece."

Aaron Lee was heavily influenced by late 1980s and early 90s MTV and VH1, noticing the way certain artists would carry a theme from their musical recordings into its visual counterparts. "Madonna had these looks," he says, "that all seemed to go with the current album—I always paid close attention to that."

For his current album, *Karma for Cheap*, Aaron Lee wanted to feel like a "fighter for love, beating back the bad vibes." He even cut out the word "KARMA" in felt and sewed the letters onto the backs of his suits in a nod to the robes that boxers wear into the ring. It's that intentionality, that attention to detail, that sets him apart from the wannabes. A lot of artists put extreme effort into looking the part, but few are so genuinely knowledgeable about why they're doing it, or how to successfully pull it off.

"If I'm going to have a lazy day at home," says Aaron Lee, "it's still important to me that I represent that intention visually in some way. I want to wear something that feels tranquil and relaxing but also visually stimulating in some way. Even zoning out has a color and a fabric."

"What you wear translates into the feeling of being able to fully embrace the moment," he explains. "I want to be dressed for the job and for the places I'm trying to get to." ◊

## Razzle Dazzle

Five of Music City's most fashionable male peacocks



### PORTER WAGONER

The *Grand Ole Opry* might've had a completely different look without the regular appearances of Porter Wagoner, who, since the early 1960s, always graced the stage in a rhinestone-and-embroidery covered suit made by either Nudie Cohen or Manuel. Most of the suits featured his signature wagon wheel design and the word, "Hi," on the lining of the jacket. By 2006, he'd accumulated 52 of them.

### MARTY STUART

No one dresses for the job of Star with a capital-S better than *The Line's* cover model, Marty Stuart. Whether he's in head-to-toe denim or kitted out in one of his many custom-made Manuel suits, he always represents the magic of country music that first grabbed him as a child in Philadelphia, Mississippi. He's been a touring musician since he was a teenager, and he's looked the part for every mile. He also has the best hair in Nashville.



### JACK WHITE

Known in his early career for dressing either monochromatically or in a very specific white-black-and-red palette, Jack White has always had a fine-tuned vision for his attire. He continues to evolve his look, branching out with more complex ensembles for his work with The Raconteurs, and is currently collaborating with Nashville's own Savannah Yarbrough and her Atelier Savas to create incredible custom pieces.

### EDDIE PEREZ

As the lead guitar-slinger in The Mavericks, Eddie Perez makes a strong statement wherever he goes. Sharp suits, scarves, and even the occasional cowboy hat ensures he never fails to hit the stage turned out like a total rock star. Even in a band of well-dressed dandies, Eddie stands out.



### DWIGHT YOAKAM

Having cultivated a look as bold as his music, Dwight Yoakam has been cutting a wide stylistic swath since the release of *Guitars, Cadillacs, Etc., Etc.* in 1986. Many have attempted to imitate his long, lean image, but Dwight remains the master at perfectly mixing hillbilly hunger with rock 'n' roll swagger.