

J A C O B B A N K S



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Like all trailblazers, Jacob Banks defies any and all boundaries. His ear-catching signature sound remains equally steeped in the swing of R&B, the grit of rock 'n' roll, the gusto of hip-hop, and the power of pop.

The singer/songwriter moved from Nigeria to Birmingham at the age of 13, and began singing, playing guitar and writing songs at the age of 20. He got his start recording songs for friends to listen to in their cars and hitting the open mic circuit before self-releasing his first EP *The Monologue* in 2013.

He has since released independent EP *The Paradox* and made his debut on Interscope Records with *The Boy Who Cried Freedom* EP, praised by everyone from *The New York Times* to *Vogue*, with *Time* recognizing "Chainsmoking" as one of the "Best Songs of 2017 So Far" and *The FADER* naming "Mercy" one of their "Songs You Need in Your Life This Week."

Jacob has recently introduced "Unknown (To You)" as the first single from his forthcoming full-length album, *The Village*. The track has received critical acclaim, featured on *The New York Times*' "The Playlist" and *NYLON*'s "Soundcheck: The 11 Best Releases of the Week" upon release.

Having supported Alicia Keys, Sam Smith and Emeli Sandé on tour, Jacob is now playing to festival crowds including Lollapalooza, Austin City Limits, The Meadows, Firefly, and Outside Lands. *The New York Times* named Jacob one of "12 Notable Acts" at SXSW. This fall, Jacob will embark on his headlining North American Into the Wild tour. The tour will kick off with a show at LA's The Roxy on November 2nd, which sold out 3 months in advance, and will run through December 5th in Atlanta.





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“Jacob Banks has soaked up American Blues and gospel; he can summon bitter moans and back-to-the-wall growls.”

— *New York Times* (“12 Notable Acts” at SXSW)

“Prepare to be floored by Jacob Banks, a rising Nigerian-born British star whose soulful voice and incisive production will get under your skin from the first listen.”

— *TIME Magazine*

“Banks’ honesty comes through with each genre-defying thing he puts out. You can feel it in your bones when he sings. He embraces heavy topics and elevates them to universal truths.”

— *NYLON*

“With the rich, soulful voice reminiscent of Motown’s finest, quasi-symphonic melodies and lyrics can slice you to the quick in a matter of moments, each track is an utterly spiritual experience.”

— *PAPER*

“...genre-bending style that lends his powerful vocals an extra punch.”

— *Interview*

“Londoner’s voice has “next big thing” written all over it”

— *Austin Chronicle*

“26-year-old British-Nigerian singer-songwriter Jacob Banks has the sort of voice that could potentially define a generation. By turns soulful and bluesy, other times distinctly fresh and pop-facing, Banks’ sonorous, silk-lined croonings are held aloft by poignant songwriting and an emotive delivery that few other performers can touch.”

— *Highsnobiety*



# J A C O B B A N K S



*Unknown (To You)*  
*Official Music Video*



*Unknown (To You)*  
*Live Session*





# J A C O B B A N K S

*US TV Debut on Late Night with Seth Meyers*



*Go' morgen Danmark (Denmark)*



*Cà Vous (France)*



*Album de la Semaine on Canal+ (France)*





# The New York Times

## The Playlist: Björk Rediscovered Love and 10 More New Songs

*Every Friday, pop critics for The New York Times weigh in on the week's most notable new songs and videos — and anything else that strikes them as intriguing. This week, Weezer sings an ode to the Beach Boys, Labrinth gets a lift from an Apple commercial, and Lorde looks for trouble on a new remix.*

### Jacob Banks, 'Unknown (to You)'



[Jacob Banks](#) makes a grandly abject apology in “Unknown (to You),” a gospelly dirge with tolling piano chords and swelling strings behind his ever more desperate baritone growl. He knows heartache and “the end” are inevitable; he offers, “It’s your turn to talk/For once I’m listening.” But he’s the one with the script for what he expects to hear: “Say that you don’t want me/Say that you don’t need me/Tell me I’m the fool.” J.P.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/15/arts/music/playlist-bjork-lorde-labrinth.html?mcubz=3>

# PAPER®



## JACOB BANKS STEPS INTO THE PAPER PENTHOUSE



Paper Magazine

01/19/18 at 01:52PM

British artist **Jacob Banks** doesn't just sing, he sends sonic shockwaves down your spine. With a Motown-influenced sound that is more gospel than R&B, the soul singer quickly became an artist to watch as soon as he debuted. He set audiences' senses alight with his 2017 EP *The Boy Who Cried Freedom* — and with the release of his full-length album, a European tour and a Coachella appearance on the horizon, there seems to be no limit as to how far Banks can go (not bad for a Birmingham boy that came up off the open-mic circuit). Check out Banks' session in the *PAPER* Penthouse, below.



PAPER Penthouse: Jacob Banks  
Posted by Paper Magazine  
84 Views





CELEBRITY SHARE ↗

## ***THIS ALT-SOUL SINGER SAYS HE'S "THE BEST RAPPER IN THE WORLD"***

We sat down with Jacob Banks in Atlanta to discuss his new album, pre-show rituals, and his musical influences.

Jacob Banks holds open a black steel door adjacent to the ticket booth of Aisle 5, where he's set to hit the stage later that night, a big wide grin bows as he softly says "Hello," to us. We follow the British-Nigerian singer through a gathering of concert attendees whispering with excitement, to his tour bus. Banks' has garnered a devoted fan base with his powerful lyrics and soulful sound.

The singer has had quite the ride to success; from singing at open mic nights in small English pubs to becoming the first performer to ever appear on BBC Radio 1 Live Lounge as an unsigned artist (quite the feat). In September of 2016, Banks signed with Universal Music Group's Interscope Records and the following April released his third EP, *The Boy Who Cried Freedom*, sharing with the world his hit single "Chainsmoking," a song that encapsulates Banks' talent. This year he's earned a spot at Coachella and is gearing up to release his debut album, *The Village*. We sat down to talk about his inspiration for his upcoming album, why he's releasing it in three parts, and what artist he's dying to work with.





*What was your exposure to music like growing up?*

"It was very minimal. My biggest introduction to music was mainly from Disney soundtracks."

*What's your creative process like?*

"Writing for me is more like trying to remember a song, it's all about energy and trusting the process. I used to [find it hard to write about personal experiences], but now I understand that I need to. It's important for my well being to moan about my shit."

*Biggest musical influences?*

"Amy Winehouse, Frank Ocean, and Kanye West."



*Has your Nigerian background had an influence on your music?*

"Yeah, it influences me in respect to my subject matter, and my mum is listening so I gotta come correct."

*You've told me before that you have an inner rapper inside of you. Is that still true?*

"I'm immersed in hip-hop culture and I take that energy everywhere so yes, like everyone else in the hip hop scene, I too believe I'm the best rapper in the world."

*What can we expect from The Village? What made you want to release it in three parts?*

"It's very introspective and I had to be honest with myself, releasing it in three parts so I can keep creating and giving my best. Plus, I don't want to play the game, I want to run at my own pace."





*What's on your rider?*

"Diabetes, basically."

*One artist you're hoping to work with in the future?*

"Kanye West."

*If you weren't singing, what would be doing?*

"Cinematography, I think."

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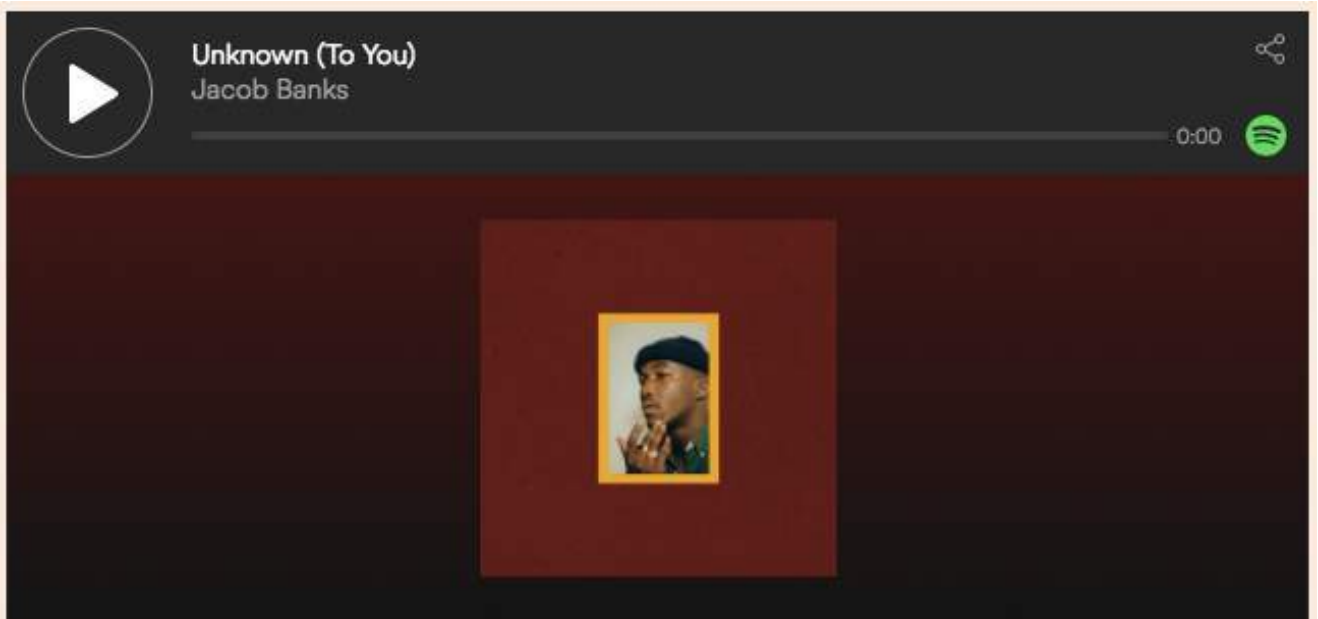


# NYLON

## Soundcheck: The 11 Best Music Releases Of The Week

Kali Uchis, Blood Orange, Jessie Ware, + many more

*Every weekend, we're bringing you #SOUNDCHECK—your new destination for the best of the best new music that hit the web over the course of the week. Because you should always be prepared when someone passes you that AUX cord. This week's round features 11 of our favorite emerging and established artists including MUNA, Kali Uchis, Blood Orange, Jessie Ware, and so many more. Turn up, tune in, and tune out.*



### “Unknown (To You)” - Jacob Banks

Our first taste of Banks' forthcoming new album is a gut punch of emotion. There is passion in Banks' voice. There is soul. There is a worldly weariness that cannot be imitated.

<https://nylon.com/articles/soundcheck-september-16-2017>



## **JACOB BANKS DESERVES TO BE JACOB BANKS, SO LET'S LET HIM**

When Jacob Banks sings, stars align. Doves take off in unison. Listening to his voice is like easing yourself into perfectly temperate bath water, like biting into a ripe, fleshy peach. It's like wrapping yourself in the fluffy towel of a \$2000-a-night hotel, or getting a text back from a crush who is definitively out of your league. This all may sound facetious, but let me put it to you like this: Jacob Banks sings, you listen.

To know the Nigerian born, Birmingham-based singer is to recognize an original — an artist that shouldn't, and hopefully won't ever be, formulaically molded into another commercially-viable cookie-cutter designed for instant radio appeal. With the rich, soulful voice reminiscent of Motown's finest, quasi-symphonic melodies and lyrics can slice you to the quick in a matter of moments, each track is an utterly spiritual experience. Signed to Atlantic after running the open mic circuit, the 26 year-old eventually ended up at Interscope, who, he says, were "signing up" for him as he was. Now, embarking on a North American tour off the back of his acclaimed EP *The Boy Who Cried Freedom* (stay tuned for a full-length project at the top of 2018), many are beginning to see Jacob Banks the way he deserves — a trend which will hopefully continue. Even with his glinting gold tooth, trademark wool beanie and strong stature, Jacob Banks is not a brand. He is better than that. Jacob Banks needs to be Jacob Banks, whatever that means.



**Your music seems almost informed by gospel, are you religious? Did that play into the development your sound at all?**

I believe there's somebody, somewhere looking out for me. It's the only thing that makes sense.

**But don't identify as any one faith?**

I grew up in a Christian home but I think we can identify with other things. I'm Christian but I think Islam is the same thing, Hindu is the same thing. These are just entities to do good and be kind to people. Some of us need to be reminded every Sunday and every Friday how to be, how to conduct ourselves. Religion is something for people to believe in. It's people going in for servicing, like when you take your car in for servicing. People need to know and be reminded.

**It's fascinating that you've put yourself forth in as a soul singer in 2017, when it's a sound that, for the most part, is largely considered outdated. What was your approach in keeping your sound modern and keeping it fresh?**

For one I don't give a shit.

**About mainstream appeal?**

Yes. Secondly, it's just a reflection of the times. That's my goal, I don't want to compete with an Al Green or Sam Cook. Plus, they reflected their time. We look at them as old school, but at some point them motherfuckers was current. They reflected their time, and I feel like I should do the same. I shouldn't try to replicate what someone has done for their time. I can take some ideas and innovate it, but I shouldn't replicate them.

**It's kind of like the old adage 'money is a bi-product of doing what you love' — your fans follow you because you're passionate, but also because you refuse to pander to them. You don't need to be watered down to be palatable.**

I think we constantly underestimate the listener. We dumb it down. The artists that we love that stand the test of time are all unique. There were no artists that have lived more than two years by copying someone else. Lil Yachty is the first of his kind. Even he is not a gimmick. You might not like what he does, but he's stars because he's unique. Even The Chainsmokers are unique. They come up with a different approach.



People need to understand that what becomes the norm at some point wasn't the norm. At some point, some shit was the freshest shit ever heard. Regardless of what happens, you have to tip your hat to those people because they came up with a different approach. All the big people have to come up with a different look, they can't repeat what the others are doing.

### **Even Drake, even Kanye.**

Even when we look at them now we think, "Oh that fucking guy," at some point they were the freshest shit on the planet.

**Was that ever an inner battle for you? Thinking, "Is this going to take off?" Because it is your livelihood. Your success and you continuing to do what you love is based on whether people will pick up on your sound.**

I've never come into music to make money. I always find a way to make money outside of music, so I'm scoring a film right now for ESPN. I make my money from that. I feed my family from that. It's just purely to push the needle.

**But now you are becoming the rock star and you are becoming the face. How's that been?**

It's harder to stick to your guns — but they're all I got. Everyday I'm battling with somebody, shit is dumb. I have to stand my ground. For me I always have to create songs that I haven't heard before. If I make something that I heard before I just don't want to do it.

**There's also something seductive about 'yes men.' Having people say, "You're a fucking dream." How do you keep your head straight, how do you stay humble as you grow?**

It's a personal battle for me because I'm a pleaser. Sometimes I have to step away but when I get home I'm like, "Man fuck that guy." Then I'll call back like actually I'm taking that back. So now I don't make any decisions when people are around because I feel like they genuinely believe this is a good song. It's not coming from a place of malice.

**How do you know that they're genuine?**

You won't get far into my life without being genuine. For you to get this close that would mean you're a great human being. In a sense that I trust the people around me. Good people attract good people. The people I work with are great human beings.



**I'm curious about your transition from being independent and releasing EP's on your own, on the open mic circuit, to signing to a label and dealing with these different opinions. What's changed? How have you changed? How has the music changed?**

For me it's like I want to look forward, I want to look forward, don't look back. People are always saying, "You should rework this song from the 60's," and I'm just like forward, forward.

**Has there been a moment you've come to where you're like, "Fuck I think I need to move into a different direction? I need to diversify?"**

No. I need this.

**Why?**

This is just my expression, this is my therapy. Every time when I write a song when I talk about something, once I get it out on a record. I'm done with that problem. That's genuinely how I release. Once I put out a record it's no longer mine, it belongs to the people.

**Are you ever intimidated by one of your songs when it comes to performing it live? Do you ever fear the emotion it might dredge up for you?**

That's interesting. I have this song off my first EP called "Dear Simone." A lot of people love that song. I wrote that song about a friend of mine who passed, I was mad depressed at the time and I caught all these feelings. I put all of these emotions together when I thought of Simone. Everyone thinks it's about a chick, but it's not. I performed the song at the start but now I just never do it. Music is a beautiful thing but it's also a constant reminder. Every time you perform these songs straight back it's still a reminder. It's a constant open wound.

**It's exactly what you said, it's almost like the crowd owns you and in that sense, it must be hard to contain your sense of self. Do you find yourself holding back often? In this setting or in your music. Do you find yourself censoring yourself or saying that's too much?**



I don't think I have the capacity to do that. For me it's the music, generally when I sing this I'm speaking my mind heavy. I spent years of being in a situation where I couldn't say how I wanted to feel. Now I can say this is how I feel. As a musician my job is to be honest and I need this and I think we're in the job of keeping people company and the company you keep should be honest. When people listen to my songs I want them to feel like they have a friend in me. I didn't start making music to impress my friends. My logic is that if you listen to my music there's a good chance we can be friends outside of this. I want to speak to my friends because you are my friend.

**So with village in particular, how is all of this manifested on that record? How did that all come to be? How did you formulate that plan?**

I think I just looked around. I want people to understand that we worked hard for this. Everybody worked hard for this. I need to know that we tried our best to get the charts. They all celebrate two sides of me. The fact that I'm Nigerian and grew up in the UK. Just all the lessons I've learned across different chapters. A lot of new artists we fall as slaves to the album system. You can be as sick as you want, but you drop an album and it doesn't do as well as someone else's who is more established it just means you're not shit. The thing is we're not all getting the same love. I'm not getting the same amount of press as those artists, so why would you judge or compare me to them. I'm knocking on ten doors for people to buy my CD and eight of them will probably buy it. I don't need validation like that. What we do is wonderful but we're not going to cure cancer. At the end of the day my cats love me and my mom loves me. I don't need validation like that. This is a hobby.

**In some sense then you must kind of feel like you really can't fail. That must be liberating.**

Yeah because this doesn't define me. I only fail if I did something I didn't want to do and it bombed.

**If you were pushed into something.**

Yeah. That's when I'd fail.



## **I'm curious about you're Kanye fandom. What is it about him to you?**

With Kanye West you can't relate to him as an average person. I relate to him from a creative standpoint. Imagine being the sickest producer but people are telling you that you can't rap? Then you rap and become the sickest rapper. Then they tell you that you can't direct your music videos. You direct your own music videos. Then he's says he wants to do fashion but they tell him he can't do fashion. So he does fashion and he bodies it. I think for me why I relate to Kanye is because he celebrates every side of music. People constantly tell him what he can or cannot do and I relate to that.

When I told people at first that I wanted to do music everyone was looking at me like umm, ok. Some of my people from school still hit me up and ask me "How's your little music thing going," and I'm like music thing? So that's why I can relate to him even though sometimes his subject matter might not be the best, he's still a creator. He's the first non-gangster rapper to make it. He was a professional young rapper with a pink polo. He uses different elements of music and that's similar to what I'm trying to do.

## **That reminds me of Lil Uzi Vert's Hot 97 freestyle. Ebro puts on this classic 90's beat...**

And he dissed it right?

**Yeah he refused to do it. So Ebro asked him what his favorite song was and Lil Uzi said "Robocop." And then Ebro's like he's going to put on the Robocop beat. The whole time Uzi is just sitting there like *that's not what I do*. Is that something that you have come up against as well? Like, what you're trying to do is just not how things are done?**

That's a hard one for me because I just had a meeting. Every meeting that I do people want me to literally sit behind a guitar and sing for them but I'm not doing that. The reason why I'm not doing that is because you're asking me to put myself in a box to please other people. If you want to see a show buy a fucking stage, put it in your office, get some speakers, and I'll give you a whole show. But because you have a voice and you can sing, they want you to sing like your around a campfire. It's the same thing with Lil Uzi Vert.



**How do you look at those people and say no?**

I just say no.

**But we're people pleasers, how do they react to that? How did you even learn to say no?**

It's still there. I explain myself and I tell them why. I don't just say no. I tell them the reasons why because at the end of the day they try to fit you into a certain brand. I want them to experience the whole spectrum. Not just the one side that fits your argument. Because then I would be doing that for everybody. I would be trying to fit that brand for them and I need to only fit me.

**Being in this world and meeting your heroes or idols, you realize how much manipulation has gone into this person, this human who is in front of you, to become their persona.**

I just always have to stand alone. There's been a lot of times where I had to stand alone. Sometimes everyone constantly tells me, "You should do this, you should do that," and sometimes I go with it but only if I can see sense in it. You're not going to see the side of me that benefits your brand.

**Did you find that when you were picked up to begin with? Were they already trying to brand you before they signed you?**

At first I was signed to Atlantic about two years ago. They only wanted to focus on one side of me which was the voice. What always happens is that you can fall in love with a voice but they won't see anything else. They don't see the artist. The voice can sound good as far as the record is concerned, but it doesn't translate into what that artist is trying to present to people. Signing with Interscope, most of the songs already existed, most of the songs were there. They came on board and they were signing up for an artist. They took me as I am so I didn't have to sell myself or prove myself this time around. It's still a bunch of great ideas but it all comes from a wonderful place.

**Has there been a moment where you've said "I'm kind of really making it right now," or is there a point where you feel that if you move into this lane and succeeded it, you know that's you?**



I had that moment a year ago. I was able to pay my mom's mortgage. I remember this story because this is always how I've defined success in my head, I use to go to the store with my mom and I wanted frosties, you know the frosted corn flakes with Tony the Tiger? I wanted those ones but my mom would always say no let's get the value sized ones because the Tony the Tiger Frosties were too expensive. She would tell me that the value ones were the same as the ones that I wanted, the only difference was that they didn't have Tony the Tiger on them. But now I can afford Tony the Tiger and my house is exclusively Tony the Tiger. I don't fuck with nothing but Tony. I also can help my family. But as it stands right now I've been able to do what I want and that's such a privilege.

**I've read a lot about other interviews you've done and you're always asked about your social commentary and an advocating for social justice.**

If you listen to my music there's no bigotry, racism, or sexism. If that's what you believe in then delete all my shit. Walk in silence and do you but don't associate yourself with me because I don't associate myself with you. The reason I do it is because it's import to denounce people that speak on behalf of us. You go into these places as a white supremacist and say that this is the way all white people think. If I was white I say, "What the fuck, no we don't." So you have to denounce these people. People who act out of hatred and say they're doing it out of love. The lovers should be like no motherfucker, that's you. It's so important to do that because it's for the other people. I have a platform where you can see me more than you can see the average person. I want you to know that there is no hatred for you. We have your back. I'm speaking on behalf of my people. We are here for you.

**In London did you grow up with any kind of that stigma?**

London is utopia, London is not real. London's welcoming and It's so inclusive. It's a wonderful place.

**Do you like doing interviews since you're getting to address this kind of stuff?**

It all just comes out. I'm just a very passionate person. I'm indifferent to them, but then again I'm talking to you right now and I'm not thinking that this is an interview. That's what it is for me. I just feel like I'm having a conversation with you. But sometimes you have to be careful because it's genuine for me. I don't want to try to please people. It doesn't really go in your favor if you were me. When it's all said and done I don't care about all the superficial stuff. If times were simpler I wouldn't be pushing the narrative.



## **Have you had any type of backlash? Has anyone been like, "Fuck you Jacob Banks?"**

I'm not sure but on YouTube it's probably really popping. It's not fantasy and I'm not making this shit up. I'm telling you what's happening. Artists from the times when music was made was meant to tell stories from towns to towns. It's always been a juxtaposition. Just tell the story. If times were cool and we were all sitting back drinking milk and honey, then I would be singing about milk and honey. But we ain't.

**But you also could just talk about lost love, doing drugs, and partying. There's always milk and honey.**

I've never tasted alcohol in my life, never tried drugs.

### **Why not?**

It just never happened. I've just chosen not to do certain things. I talk about lost love and other things. The two most prominent things in my life is love and oppression. I'm either being loved or I'm being oppressed. I don't have anything else. This is my reality. Something happened to me the other day I was working with a transgender producer in the studio, sweetheart, and in that session Trump passed that military law. I've never felt so hopeless in my entire existence. She's close to me and I can't do shit to make her feel comfortable. She left the session. For some reason I feel directly responsible because I was there when that news hit her. This is why I'm going to speak about this because these are affecting real people. That is the closest I'd ever been to someone who's transgender and to see how it affected somebody else you have to denounce his laws.

There's a food chain almost. There's the lowest and there's the highest. If you asked a white woman today, "If you can take on all the problems and difficulties of being black would you?" Some people are oppressed more than others but I don't think the answer is in segregating the problems. I think the answer is in helping other people.

**What do you say to that culture being popularized? For example, white women enhancing their lips, adopting elements of Black culture because it's perceived beautiful, while remaining removed the same culture's oppression.**



What it is with that is it's not just the taking of. It's more like black person with normal dreads who is trying to get a job might be told no, but a white person with dreads ain't getting a job. That's what the problem is. The difference is when we do it, it's scrutiny. When someone else does it, it's the new thing. I read in a publication someone saying that dew rags were the new thing and I couldn't believe it. I was like please don't do this. I was looking through it and there was a white girl wearing a dew rag. I was saying, "Please, don't do this." It's not the people as much, it's the system that's vindicating them. If Black people, Spanish people, or any other race of people get the same treatment then it would be fine. Back to the lips topic, it's a problem when you're praising other girls but the originators aren't being credited. If you just recognized the one then everybody could get it, but they're only praising one and denouncing the other.

### **Since you don't drink or smoke, do you have other vices?**

I play video games to destress, it's nothing more than something for me to do when I'm by myself. I love cartoons. I love cereal and I love spending time with my loved ones. That's kind of me.

### **You never experienced peer pressure?**

I'm the kind of person where if everybody wants to do it, I would say no just to piss people off.

### **You never experienced peer pressure?**

I'm the kind of person where if everybody wants to do it, I would say no just to piss people off.

### **You never wanted to be cool?**

No. I never wanted to be the cool kid. Fuck the cool kids. When everybody was trying to be cool in school, I was like fuck you guys. Just to prove my point, it doesn't matter what it is — as long as it's different.



Unknown (To You) Official Music Video  
Jacob Banks



# UNKNOWN (TO YOU)

FRANKFOLW & MEETDY PRESENT A JACOB BANKS PRODUCTION "UNKNOWN" WITH FIDEL AJOGBE & ANABENA ANSAH MUSIC BY FRANKFOLW & JACOB BANKS  
FRANKFOLW & JACOB BANKS WRITERS: FRANKFOLW & RIHARDO ACHILEDS AND MUSIC BY WAS ABRAHAM  
PRODUCED BY TAMARA BARTON CAMPBELL EDITOR: JACOB BANKS AND NEMAN BAILY  
STYLING: DAN, ANNE & NAZARETH

▶ 0:09 / 3:56 🔊

vevo

<http://www.papermag.com/jacob-banks-deserves-to-be-jacob-banks-so-lets-let-him-2493404979.html>



# NYLON

## Jacob Banks Won't Be Unknown To You For Long

Prepare accordingly



"I think music should be seen, not heard," Jacob Banks says. The Birmingham, England, musician has just finished an astounding festival set at The Meadows where soul was on the menu and served a lot. His debut studio album, *The Village*, is due out next spring and promises much of what we've come to expect from his previous EPs: the unexpected.



Unknown (To You)

Jacob Banks

Unknown (To You)



1 Unknown (To You)

3:53

You see, Banks is one of those artists who fell into the recording industry. “I would’ve been happy just singing in my bathroom with my guitar,” he says, “but my friends kept pushing me; I used to record songs just so my friends could play them in their car.” Then Interscope came knocking, and here he is, pulling impressive streaming numbers and a quickly growing fan base. That’s not too shabby for a former civil engineer student who just wanted to impress his friends.

“Everything past this point is a bonus,” Banks continues. “I can look after my family, I can stand up for people that need to be stood up for, and I get to express myself for a living—like I literally get to say how I feel every day for a living, and that’s a privilege I try to never forget.”

*The Village*, then, is a testament to all the people and experiences that have shaped him. “You know the phrase ‘It takes a village to raise a child’?” he asks. “That’s the impetus for this project.” It’s taken much self-reflection and questioning why he acts certain ways with people and in life; songs like “Unknown (To You)” take on the shifting power dynamics between people, especially those engaged in serious, sometimes violent relationships. Banks’ honesty comes through with each genre-defying thing he puts out. You can feel it in your bones when he sings. He embraces heavy topics and elevates them to universal truths.

As a self-taught musician, Banks truly is in a league of his own. His taste, he says, is what guides him, and man, what a taste he has. Banks’ music is rich. He doesn’t make himself out to be anything other than he is: a vulnerable individual with a keen ability to empathize through music. Listening to him through your speakers is one thing, but seeing him perform is another. Jacob Banks should be seen *and* heard.

<https://nylon.com/articles/jacob-banks-interview-meadows-2017>



# VIBE

**NEXT: If You Like Good Things  
And Sounds That Stir, Allow Us  
To Properly Introduce Jacob  
Banks**



On an aggressively hot August day in Manhattan's Lower East Side, 26-year-old Jacob Banks emerges cool as a fan. Taking up residency at Hotel Rivington, the singer-songwriter dons a burgundy button-down that appears to have been thrifted, along with sweatpants and pair of black and white Nikes. Per usual, Banks offers up his trademark introduction: "Hi, I'm Jacob Banks and I sing songs."

When he's feeling a little wild, he'll throw an adverb into the mix.

"I'm Jacob Banks and I *predominantly* sing songs," he says with a mischievous smile, showing off his one gold tooth.

It's not that Banks is short on vocabulary, it's just that the Nigerian-born, Birmingham, UK-raised artist would much rather keep things simple, a practice he's brought to his lyrics for all three of his EPs *The Monologue*, *The Paradox* and, most recently, *The Boy Who Cried Freedom*. Banks learned this lesson giggin' around London at open mics. Quickly Banks, the oldest of four, realized open mics were open season for anyone wanting to make fun of you, and an artist only has the first few bars of a song to capture someone's attention.

"People can't wait to find out that you're s\*\*t. They can't wait for it. They're nudging their friends like, 'Look at this guy.' So you just learn how to earn people's attention," Banks reminisces. "What's simple and what's the truth, they just know. It's not the phonetics or the acrobatics of your voice that people care about. I think people are looking for a little bit of them in you every time. I found the simpler it was it just worked, even if your voice was shaky or whatever."

Stage fright wasn't something Banks had to overcome, nor is shaky an accurate word to describe the harmonious, yet soothing growl of his voice. Standing at 6'4, Banks sings with the ferocity of a man tired of being tired; like you owe him money and he's done asking kindly. Banks' voice is the church pew and the choir robe. It's the pastor's thunderous reading of John 3:16. If Otis Redding wore Converses and a skully, he'd be Mr. Jacob Banks.



It took Banks taking the scenic route to jumpstart his career, and by scenic route, he means earning a degree in civil engineering. As Banks recalls, he did so to please his agriculture father and nurse mother, but music was always hovering nearby. One day, Banks says he randomly bought a red guitar named Mrs. Robinson, simply because it looked good. About two weeks later, the flat he shared with friends had been robbed and the one possession the thieves didn't take was his red guitar. With nothing else to do in a house that had just been ransacked, Banks decided to put Mrs. Robinson to good use.

"It was like, 'Well this guitar's here, we have Internet, we should learn to play,'" he says nonchalantly.



Banks wrote poetry in his downtime and after taking guitar lessons via YouTube, it only made sense he venture into songwriting.

"I think the natural progression for me was to try and express myself and at that point, I had heard a John Mayer record from the album *Continuum* and I wanted to have the same avenue to express myself in that way. So, I started writing and I wrote a song called, 'Let Me Love You'."

As a devout fan of the Irish boy band Westlife, Banks says he "stole" some chords from one of their songs and began humming a melody that came to him to create the guitar ballad.

"For me, it was purely for expression. Going through what I was going through at the time, studying what I didn't want to study to impress family, I think I lacked self-love. Looking back at it, I guess these things in the moment you miss what your mind is trying to tell you, when you look at it again it's so obvious what the song was about. The song was about self-love."

Banks recorded "Let Me Love You" on his friend's iPhone 4, who then entered it into the ADIDAS Mobo Unsung Regional competition. About six months passed without any word from officials and then in the summer of 2013, Banks got the call. He's all cool and collected about it now, but says when he learned he won a nationwide competition for the very first song he wrote he was beside himself, to say the least.

"I sounded like such a wimp," Banks says smiling. "I was screaming on the phone like, 'No! No!' You have to understand we entered the competition and in that time in between, I'd fallen head-over-heels for music. I was so besotted with it to be able to express myself like that. I had never experienced anything quite like it. So hearing the first thing I ever did, actually the first song I ever wrote, won that competition was a lot."

As his prize, Banks worked with a UK artist and became the first unsigned singer to appear on BBC Radio 1 Live Lounge. Banks, 22 at the time, also later made his informal musical debut with the release of *The Monologue*.



Banks knew music was his path but it was a matter of getting his mom and dad to agree that was the challenge. With traditional Nigerian parents, Banks understood why the idea of civil engineering seemed like a more secure option than singing, so like most 20-somethings unsure of how to get their parents on board with their dreams, Banks bent the truth a bit.

"If my mom ever reads this she's going to f\*\*king kill me. I told my mom I was moving to London for a placement in a civil engineering company. But, I wasn't," he laughs.

*VIBE: So you lied to your mom?*

*"I didn't say that."*

*VIBE: Mmmhmm...*



After graduating college in 2014, Banks moved to London to perform around the city and, as he puts it, "to make a name for myself and to see if I belonged here." On stage, Banks would either do a rendition of Marvin Gaye's "Let's Get It On" or Floetry's "Say Yes" and a few self-described "mediocre" songs he wrote. To survive, he either worked retail or pocketed a pound or two from the shows he booked. Banks gave himself a year and claimed if nothing came from his musical efforts he'd simply find a new occupation. At the end of 2014, Banks' hard work paid off when he signed with Atlantic Records, but things didn't go as smoothly as he hoped.

"They just saw me as a 6-foot-4 black pop star and I said, 'Good luck with that.' That's just not going to work," he says matter-of-factly.

*VIBE: And you're a 6-foot-4 black, what?*

"Guy."

Atlantic Records saw Banks in one light, yet despite his talent Banks is still a black man who admittedly has endured more racism stateside than he has touring the world. While in California, Banks recalls having been called the n-word from the most unlikely of places.

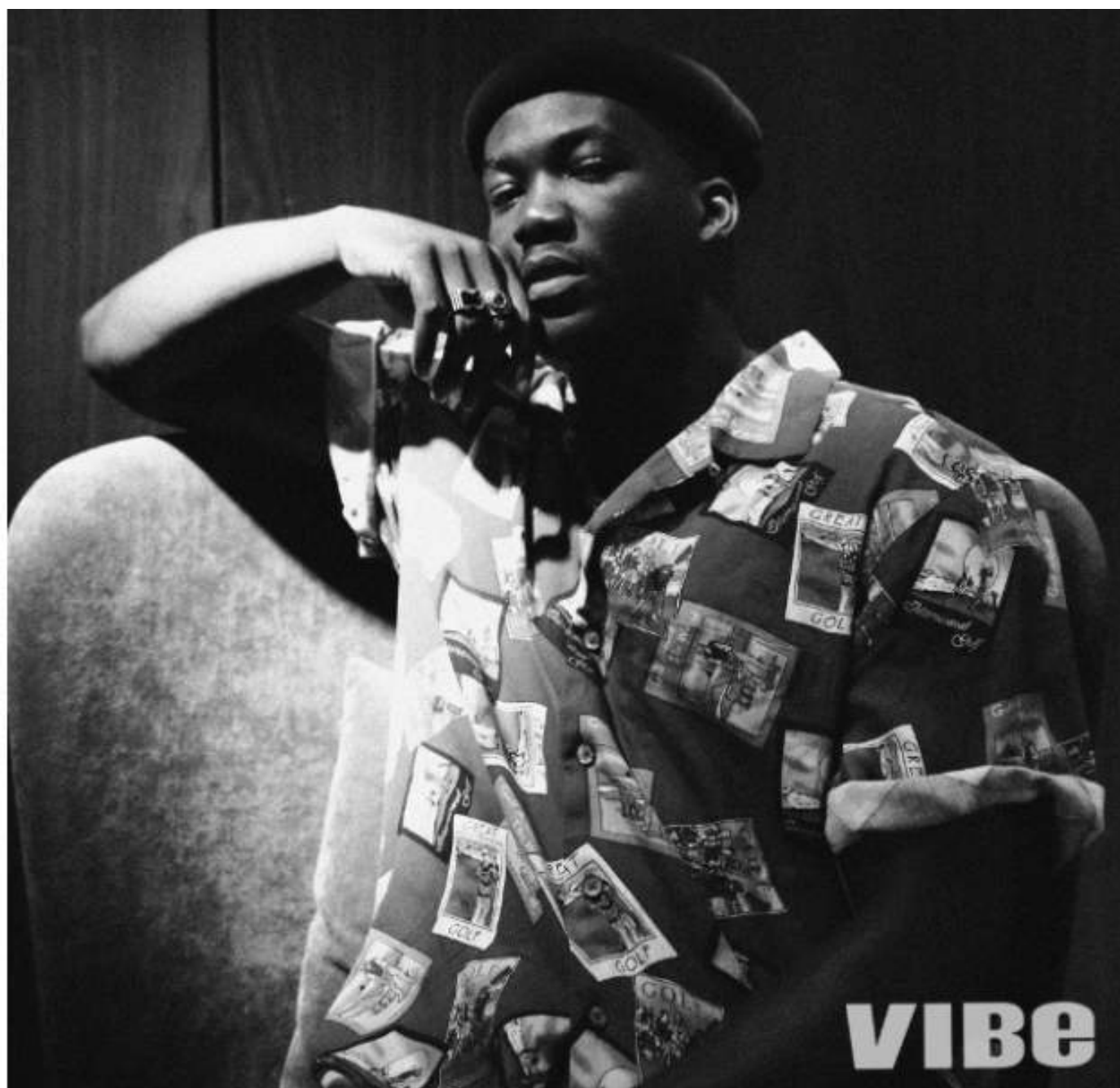
"It was intriguing to me. I see this homeless dude on a bench, I stay in Santa Monica, and I see him on the same bench every day. Even as low as life is to you, you still see yourself higher than a black person. That's mad weird to me," Banks says. "So this is what happened. I was walking and he was arguing with this white homeless lady. I was walking past them and in that moment he looked at me and pointed at me and said, 'Not even that n\*\*\*\*r over there can help you.' I was like 'What the?'"

According to Banks, a confrontation ensued and a plethora of insults were slung. The homeless man eventually apologized, but for Banks, defending himself as well as his music is second nature.



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After a few meetings with Atlantic Records, it was clear the partnership wasn't going to work and Banks asked if he could be let out of his contract. Feeling as if he had something to prove, Banks (who also parted ways with his management at the time) moved to a small village outside of London to create his follow-up EP *The Paradox*, which spawned his single "Monster."



"That was what 'Monster' was for me. It was like you forced me out my chair. I didn't want to have to have these conversations. This is you. I was cool on my side of the fence. You pissed me off," Banks describes of what inspired the tribal-infused song. "Like, you've awakened a beast. I'd rather be sleeping. I'd rather be chillin,' eating jerk chicken, living life lavishly and look what you've done. That was what 'Monster' was about, just me and that relationship. Asking for the basic of things became a challenge."

Success would belong to Mr. Banks when "Monster" was used as the promotion for Season Four of the Starz scripted drama *Power*, as well as "Unknown" at the end of Season Three. The heartbreaking piano ballad depicts a lover giving his partner one final chance to say the things they never said out of love, fear of simply keeping the peace.

If you listen to Banks' music you'll get the feeling of – as the elderly say – "he's been here before." Musically his soul is old, but Banks is still 26—or a British 26, if that makes sense. He uses words like "exquisite" to describe his alleged globally renowned parallel parking skills and "lavish" to denote how fancy he is now that he's purchased a Dyson Hoover vacuum for his birthday. As a Nigerian, he must say his Jollof rice is a notch above the rest, but the verdict is still out on that according to Banks himself. In his photos, Banks looks serious and philosophical, as if he responds to the most basic questions in Haiku. But in person, Banks is thoughtful, clever, welcoming and funny.

He's a big Disney and Cartoon Network fan and loves watching Steve Carell and his awkward gang on *The Office*. He doesn't drink or smoke and calls himself a grandpa for not desiring the club. When he's not talking to his siblings or in the studio, he's coolin' with his two cats, Prince Lord Zuko, first of his name and Mustafa Biscuits, a love that's apparently stronger than the very real allergies he has to them.

"Like really, what's an allergy?" Banks says with a laugh.

After the release of *The Paradox* it didn't take long for Banks to find a new label home at Interscope Records, where he created his latest EP *The Boy Who Cried Freedom*, led by the politically-charged video he directed for "Chainsmoking."





Looking back on it, it took Banks about four years from winning the competition to now gearing up for his debut album, *The Village*. Being released in three chapters beginning in October, Banks isn't interested in playing the traditional album release game, which he deems unfair to new artists. He wants his fans – whom he refers to as friends or "My Gs" – to hear it in their own timeframe.

"These songs mean a lot to me and I want people to be able to ingest them at their own time and their own pace because I believe as a new artist, if you're asking someone to give you an hour and a half of their day, you're asking a lot." Banks explains. "I just want to change the way the system is. It doesn't work for artists of our generation because we always fall short of whatever standards somebody else has set. So yeah, I just want to run my own race."

The first chapter of his full-length record will have six tracks and be reflective of his African roots. The second will encompass British culture, which will have a heavy Caribbean dosage, and the third will be a mix of the two. "Unknown," the first single from the album, which originally appeared on *The Paradox*, received a facelift of sorts when Banks re-recorded it at the top of the year. He says he's a better artist now than when he initially made the song, but maintains it didn't receive the marketing effort it deserved.

"When 'Unknown' came out, I knew it was an amazing song and it connected with a lot of people but there was no real push. It didn't really get a chance to show itself, but it really connected with the people who heard it. When it went on *Power* it charted in the U.S., it charted in the U.K. and that's off a TV show. There was never any real push. I just wanted people to have a chance to hear it and I'm a better artist now than I was then and I'd feel uncomfortable putting it out again as it was."

His publicist gives us the cue it's time to wrap up. We chat for a bit about his tattoos (he has three) and the extents to which he'll travel for jerk chicken. But when it's all said and done, like his lyrics, Banks is just a simple man.

"I'm somebody's son, somebody's brother and somebody who's trying to figure it out," he says.

Same, Mr. Banks. Same.





<https://www.vibe.com/2017/09/jacob-banks-interview-next/>

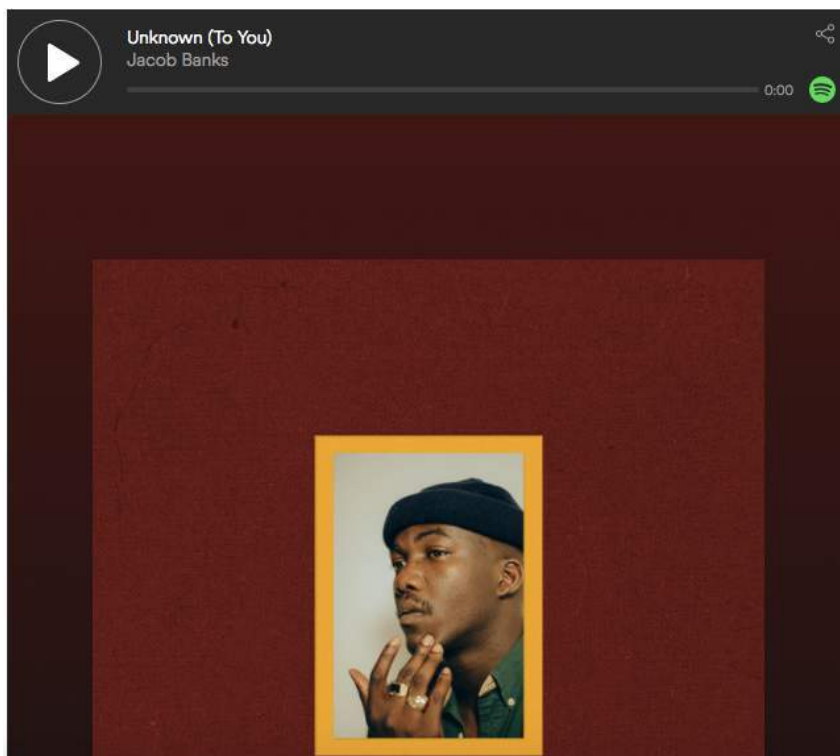


# Old Soul, New Body: How Jacob Banks Is Modernizing the Blues



It may be hasty to say, but 26-year-old British-Nigerian singer-songwriter [Jacob Banks](#) has the sort of voice that could potentially define a generation. By turns soulful and bluesy, other times distinctly fresh and pop-facing, Banks' sonorous, silk-lined croonings are held aloft by poignant songwriting and an emotive delivery that few other performers can touch. Though the singer released his first EP, *Monologue*, in 2012, it was only last year he finally signed with a major label. He followed up the move with his latest EP, *The Boy Who Cried Freedom*, which came as a primer to his first American tour, with his most recent release coming in the form of the single "Unknown (To You)."





Since then, he's been on a non-stop journey across America and the rest of the world, and for good reason – Banks' heady, contemporized soul music hits the sweet spot between history and progression. He can moan and wail like a distant relative of Otis Redding and in the next breath flip the script, offering up witty observances on modern love and culture with the same smooth delivery as one of his songwriting idols, John Mayer. Songs like "Photograph," which appears on *The Boy Who Cried Freedom* EP reveal this innate talent for fusing succinct lyricism with powerhouse vocals.

"We used to have it all," Banks opens over a slick guitar riff, "like Chicago Bulls in '93, then came that Civil War, now texting you is like a battlefield." In an age where "ghosting" has become a full-on thing and relationships live and die by the keystroke of an iPhone, it's the sort of observation that makes Banks' music relatable. That, coupled with the stellar reviews his stateside shows are racking up, indicate by all accounts, 2018 will be the year of Jacob Banks.



**What does youth mean to you?**

I think youth is an energy. Youth is staying in touch with the now.

**How does youth manifest in your music? It manages to look backwards while still being progressive.**

I think it's important to always pay homage to the things before you, but you might compete with them, and you might outdo them. I just accept something for whatever it is, try to innovate on old ideas, and take the time to build on what others have done. I want to speak to the now.



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What is your first memory of soul music?

One of my earliest memories of soul music moving me was watching *The Book of Eli* with Denzel Washington. There's a scene where he's sad and alone – there's a song that plays in the background. It's Al Green, "How You Can Mend A Broken Heart." That was one of the first moments that soul music really moved me.



**Who are some newer artists who've influenced you?**

I adore Frank Ocean. I love Kehlani, and Daniel Caesar. I think that's it.

**How did your Nigerian background influence your taste in music?**

I think my Nigerian background affects how I perceive tempo. I like more tribal energies as opposed to a full dancefloor environment. So I like to have stuff that has more rhythm as opposed to tempo. That side of me really shows in more uptempo songs like "Monster." I think I always go back to just the essence of that tribal sound.

**You've said that you don't come from a musical family. Where did the majority of your exposure occur?**

A lot of it just came from watching TV. I find most of my earliest memories of music are always tied to a film that I saw, or especially Disney movies.

**One of the most memorable things about your music is your voice and the poignancy of your lyrics. How do you approach songwriting?**

I let the music lead the way because I see myself as a vessel. I'm always trying to remember something and trying to create something. So I think music always triggers a memory and I try to document and give an accurate description of what I'm feeling in a moment in the nicest way possible.





**What about writing TV jingles and the other advertorial stuff you've done? Did that help hone those skills?**

I do that mainly because it just triggers a different side of my brain. I think I'm not thinking too much about heavy truths all the time. I can be playful. I think it's important to engage all aspects of your brain. These things are important, because otherwise I'd just be mad depressed all the time. I'd just be moaning about shit.

**You said that you first bought a guitar because you liked how it looked. What kept you coming back after that?**

How it felt. I think the guitar was the first time I got to fully express myself for once in all my life. That was addictive to me. I never had an outlet before.



There is a really cinematic feel to songs like “Unholy War,” for instance. What were some of the inspirations behind that soulful sound?

I just write and watch film scenes and music videos that I love. I know what I want to say, so I find a music video that mirrors that energy and kind of map out the music to that visual. In “Unholy War,” more than anything I was trying to paint a feeling, the feeling and essence of oppression. So, there was more in that approach than just how I can create a song sonically, I wanted to create something outside of the words. I wanted to create a visual that sounds like what I’m talking about.





Let's talk about *The Boy Who Cried Freedom*. What was going in your life during the creation of that EP?

When I was making the EP, I was looking to be free of the most minuscule things. In my personal life, I also found myself asking the same questions. I wanted to be free of labels. I wanted to be free to express myself how I wanted, as opposed to be pigeonholed. I wanted to speak in many voices for many people.

## What can we expect from the forthcoming album?

I think this album is heavily influenced by just looking back into life, looking at what my taste is, and everything that makes me. This album is a massive reflection of who I am as a person and things that make me tick, my background, being African, and my current life. And being in the worst state, all these things meshing together. I wanted to share those two aspects at the same time.

I think you can expect a journey of emotions. It's not – I'm not speaking on the same thing over and over again. I take myself through a bunch of emotions from as young as I can remember until now. You just expect to hear many layers of myself, and me just being honest through all these emotions.

<https://www.highsnobiety.com/2017/10/05/jacob-banks-interview/>



# NYLON

## Soundcheck: The 10 Best Music Releases Of The Week

Kehlani, Kid Froopy, Great News, + many more

*Every weekend, we bring you #SOUNDCHECK—your new destination for the best of the best new music that hit the web over the course of the week.*

*Because you should always be prepared when someone passes you that AUX cord. This week's round features 10 of our favorite emerging and established artists including Kehlani, Kid Froopy, Jacob Banks, and so many more. Turn up, tune in, and tune out.*



### **"Unknown (To You)" - Jacob Banks**

What does it mean for a man to express his feelings for another man, regardless of sexuality? What does it mean to be a black man expressing his feelings for another man, regardless of sexuality? Jacob Banks explores those questions in the new video for the first single his debut album, *The Village*. Powerful doesn't even begin to cover it.

<https://nylon.com/articles/soundcheck-october-7-2017>

## Q&A: Jacob Banks Talks Sonic Balance, Kanye West, and Signature Beanie



A innovative, fresh sound laced with classic influences. A powerfully dominant voice singing of emotionally delicate, sociopolitical themes. African-inspired soul grooves backed by heavy beats. One might assume that, if combined, the aforementioned elements would clash severely...but not if you're [Jacob Banks](#).

Banks' distinct sound was born from a natural manifestation of his personal music taste and his contrasting environments. While he draws inspiration from the classic soul of Al Green, he also enjoys the pop/folk sensibilities of John Mayer and respects the boldness of Kanye West and Rick Ross—all of which cohesively make their way into his own music. Moreover, Banks was born in Nigeria and currently resides in London, UK, which explains the sometimes paradoxical sonic and lyrical content—“Some of [the songs] are strong and powerful—the melancholy of London. And some—like, the songs about my mum and stuff—will come from the Africa side, being very family oriented.”



As a follow up to his *Boy Who Cried Freedom* EP, released in April 2017, Jacob Banks' latest is a heart-wrenching ballad by the name of "[Unknown \(To You\)](#)." He's currently gearing up for a handful of European tour dates, followed by a North American tour through early December—[don't miss out](#).

After following Jacob Banks for the better part of the last two years, we finally got to sit with the prolific artist to talk beginnings, YouTube resourcefulness, Kanye West, artists to watch, and the real secret under that beanie.



**OTW:** You originally graduated as a civil engineer, right?

JB: Yeah.

**OTW:** So, how did you first get into music?

JB: I got into music by chance. Like, I learned to play a guitar off YouTube, and I used to write poetry a lot growing up. So I just started singing along when I learned guitar, and I'd write little songs and stuff just for fun. And my friends would ask me to record these songs so they could play them in their cars, and I would. And that's how it happened—just me making songs that my friends liked. And they were like, "Oh, you should do an EP," so I did an EP. Then it was, "Maybe you should play this show," cool, I'll play this show... and it just all spiraled out of control really quickly. That's how it happened.

**OTW:** How did you land on your specific style of music?

JB: I think it came very natural to me. I think we're all racing against our taste. So, if you are someone who creates, or if you make anything, you judge how good of a band you think it is by your taste level. So we're all trying to replicate our taste.

*Like, I love Kanye West, but I also love John Mayer. I love Al Green but I also love Rick Ross. So these are my tastes. So how can I bring all these things I love together? I love the old and the new. So how can I present it to people? I'm just trying to create what I like, and that was it: just taking the old vibe but giving it a modern twist, is kind of what we're trying to do. And that's how it came about.*

**OTW: Cool! So you were born in Nigeria and now you live in London—how would you say both of those places affect you as an artist and as a person?**

JB: Growing up in Nigeria allowed me to sympathize with a lot of things that happen in the world, that touch a lot of people. And growing up in London—for me, London's like the capitol of the world. Like, it's genuinely mad because of the amount of people, and it's unified, and everyone understands the role that everybody else plays. And I think having both is really interesting to how I make my music, because I speak for the oppressed, and London is very... London never backs down. Like, Brits just never back off in general. So that's the energy that I get from London—we always say how we feel. I think Africans are a bit more delicate. They're very warm people, wouldn't want to piss anybody off, so I learned to shift between the two.

*Certain songs are more delicate, some of them strong and powerful—the melancholy of London. And some—like, the songs about my mum and stuff—will come from the Africa side, being very family oriented.*

**OTW: Cool, great balance. So you were the first unsigned act to appear on *BBC Radio 1*. What was that like, and how has the shift been like from that to now?**

JB: That was fun. I don't feel any different, to be fair. I'm making music I want to make. I feel exactly the same towards my team now; I just feel like I have more help, like more people to balance off creativity. There's no doing away your independence—it's you trying to make sense of it all. So it's nice to have another brain to check yourself, to have your back. It's pretty much the same, just a bigger team.

**OTW: Do you feel like that was your big break?**

JB: The Live Lounge? There was no turning back after that. It's cool to make songs in your friend's bedroom or whatever, but if you're presenting yourself on *Radio 1*, you're saying, "I'm here and this is me." You can't pack it in now, you can't turn around. I guess you can, but it was me announcing myself that I want to play.



## Jacob Banks - Magic in the Live Lounge



**OTW: Did you want to turn around before that? Have you ever considered going back to civil engineering?**

JB: I would make a terrible civil engineer. People will die! Lots of people. This is for the best! I'm good at applying myself; I can be good at anything I want to be good at—doesn't mean that I like it. So I can just apply myself, which is how I got through it. I don't think I've ever looked back, it makes me too happy to look back. See like, as someone who works in journalism or stuff: When you read pieces, half your brain is criticizing, and half your brain is ingesting. So sometimes I wish I wasn't so much of an artist, because sometimes you don't listen to enjoy, you listen to pick up faults, which isn't nice. That's what I'm saying; that's the only thing I wish I could take back.

**OTW: Do you have an idea of an end goal or a definition of success for yourself?**

JB: For me, it's just to look after my loved ones.

**OTW: So, according to some Twitter stalking, you are a *Game of Thrones* fan. Would you kill for a cameo?**

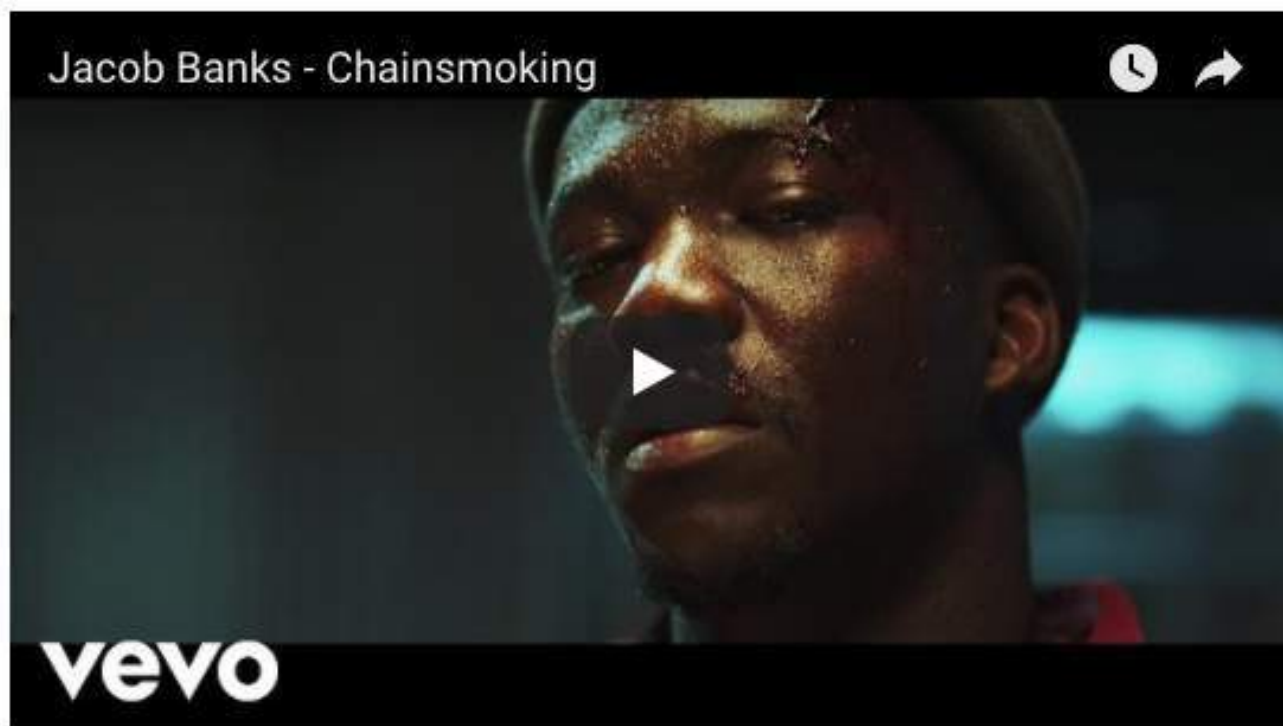
JB: No, I wouldn't! After what happened with Ed Sheeran, I think I don't want one. You know what it is? It was just unnecessary. He didn't do bad or anything, but it's not some Netflix original trying to make headway; it was unnecessary. If it was like, a new show trying to get fans and all that...I get it, but he wasn't bad at all, he was quite good. He sang, it was wonderful. But it just didn't need to happen. Even the whole scene didn't need to happen.

**OTW: *The Boy Who Cried Freedom* is your latest, where did the name come from?**

JB: I think it just came from just what we're seeing in politics and everything. I think people were asking for the most basic shit. Like, take "Black Lives Matter" for example. It's a fair thing to ask for. Or women saying, "We want equal rights, we're not asking for more, we just want the same thing you're having." Sounds fair! Or people are asking for refuge because their homes have been torn down by war that we've instigated—also fair!

So it's like, freedom is the most basic shit, like everybody should get this. And that's where it came from. And for me as well, I feel like I was always trying to justify my taste and what I wanted to make. And I was like, I should be able to make what I want to make, and people are going to have to tell me their fears as much as I don't come into your workplace and incite fear into what you make.

*For me it's just like, freedom is just a basic requirement. I think that's where it came from.*



**OTW: Do you get criticism for your style of music?**

JB: No, what it is, is everybody's scared until it happens. Once it happens, it becomes the norm. But everybody's the first of their kind: Rihanna's the first Rihanna. I mean, you hear everyone is trying to be like Rihanna, everybody's trying to copy an original. But for me the original is cooler because it's like, you don't know. And people naturally are going to put forwards their fears, and that's cool; it's human nature to do that. Like, I don't have to because I was in a situation before with old management and an old label and they were very unsure; they didn't want to stick their neck out. So I think that's where that came from.



JB: I just feel like he's always pushing the needle. The thing with music is everybody knows what they think they know. So if you grew up and someone tells you an apple is an orange, you're going the rest of your life thinking it was. So he's always pushing the needle introducing new sounds, new elements, new ways for people to decide like, "Actually I fuck with this," or "Actually I don't fuck with this," but he's always pushing the needle of the scale of what we think we like, and I love that about him.

**OTW: Yeah. Do you respect him as a person too?**

JB: As a person, I do. I feel like he's easy to understand. He's not perfect, but if you imagine all your wonderful moments and all your poor moments being publicized every day, you'd make just as many mistakes as he does. The difference is the whole world has to hear his mistakes. That's the only difference! I get him, like you have to imagine if people are constantly telling you you can't do something. For every time you've proven them wrong, it's a weird thing. Like, people told him he couldn't make beats: he made beats. They said he couldn't rap: he rapped. They said he couldn't make clothes: he made clothes. They said he couldn't design his own visuals and stuff... It's like, what more do you want the man to do? Every time you've said no, he goes out and does it, and still people are like, "Just rap." To have the whole world tell you no every time... it must fuck with you to a certain level.

JB: I think I got into it because everybody I used to work with used to take forever, and I'd rather just do it myself. People take forever to do stuff. And I have really good friends who are directors, so it was just like, I just hung around watched how they did it. And we collaborated on a lot of stuff, and same with "Unholy War"—Cody's my boy, and we've been talking for like, four years and always wanted to work.

*I just love being hands on. I feel like the only person who's Jacob 24/7 is me. Everybody else has to check out. At some point you have to look after your family, deal with your shit, nobody can physically care as much as I can. Because they don't, it's impossible. I can't hold it against them. So I'll just get the ball rolling then people will join.*

**OTW: Who are a few artists on your *Ones To Watch* list?**

JB: There's a couple people from the UK— there's a lady called [Elli Ingram](#), there's [Kojey Radical](#). There's an afrobeat artist called [Maleek Berry](#). It'll change your life—he infuses afrobeat music with R&B in the most smooth, coolest way ever. There's also a lady called [Amber Mark](#). She's on the label, and [Billie Eilish](#), and a guy called [Billy Raffoul](#).

**OTW: I just saw Billy, he's insane live.**

JB: We've been touring together, he's opening the tour! In the fall.

## Jacob Banks - Unholy War



**OTW:** Last but not least, any reason for the signature folded beanie?

**JB:** I don't know how it all spiraled out of control!

**OTW:** How many do you have?

**JB:** I have a few. Like, at least 20. At least. I don't know, I just always like them. The thing is, people think there's something wrong with me. Hairline's healthy, like I'm good! Everyone thinks like, he's probably bald, he probably doesn't have eyebrows, I don't know. Like, I'm fine. I only wear it when I go to work.



JACOB BANKS

*into the wild*  
*into the wild*  
WORLD TOUR  
*into the wild*  
*into the wild*  
*into the wild*  
*into the wild*

EUROPE

- OCT 12 AMSTERDAM, NL
- OCT 13 BERLIN, DE
- OCT 14 PARIS, FR
- OCT 16 STOCKHOLM, SE
- OCT 17 COPENHAGEN, DK
- OCT 18 OSLO, NO
- OCT 20 BARCELONA, ES
- OCT 21 MADRID, ES
- OCT 30 LONDON, GB
- DEC 11 LONDON, GB
- DEC 12 MANCHESTER, GB
- DEC 13 BIRMINGHAM, GB

NORTH AMERICA

- NOV 2 HOLLYWOOD, CA
- NOV 3 SANTA CRUZ, CA
- NOV 6 PORTLAND, OR
- NOV 7 SEATTLE, WA
- NOV 10 BOULDER, CO
- NOV 11 DENVER, CO
- NOV 13 EL PASO, TX
- NOV 16 DALLAS, TX
- NOV 17 HOUSTON, TX
- NOV 18 NEW ORLEANS, LA
- NOV 20 NASHVILLE, TN
- NOV 24 TORONTO, ON
- NOV 28 BOSTON, MA
- NOV 29 NEW YORK, NY
- NOV 30 BROOKLYN, NY
- DEC 5 ATLANTA, GA

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT  
MRJACOBANKS.COM



<http://www.onestowatch.com/blog/ga-jacob-banks-talks-sonic-balance-kanye-west>

## 7 New R&B Crooners You Need To Check Out

ESSENCE

3

### JACOB BANKS

He's Nigerian-born and British-bred, but the 26-year-old's sound nods to Dirty Delta Blues

Our playlist are upgraded thanks to the new cast of R&B crooners we've been listening to. They're sharing their emotions with us almost as though they've intrusted us with their journals. The lyrics used to share their stories of teenage love, idenity, growing up homeless and making it, cut deep and create a space for us to be honest with ourselves as we learn to navigate what it means to heal, be brave and love.

They aren't playing by R&B's traditional rules of sticking to a slow moving tempo, but they are staying true to the genre's emotional vulnerability. R&B has always pulled inspiration from gospel, pop and rock & roll, but these artists are doing it liberally –creating a brand new blueprint.

These are some of the artists we're listening to these days:

Jacob Banks- He's Nigerian-born and British-bred, but the 26-year-old's sound nods to dirty delta blues. Be sure to check out his latest single, [Unknown \(to you\)](#).



# billboard

## Jacob Banks Adds New Perspective to an Old Favorite in 'Unknown (To You)' Video: Exclusive



Sometimes songs need time to grow into themselves, which is exactly what we're witnessing in the new video for [Jacob Banks'](#) "Unknown (To You)" out today (Oct. 3) via Darkroom/Interscope.

The video centers on an adolescent boy attempting to confront and resolve the tenuous relationship with his father. What follows is a trial of mixed signals and missed opportunities that's both unflinching and affectionate in its portrayal of two polar opposites colliding. Although the scenes were not pulled directly from his past, the script written by Banks was informed by the recently matured relationship with his father and conversations he wishes they'd had earlier in life.

"I think the relationship is very tender between man-and-man because life teaches men to pretend to be okay all the time, and even when we're not we have to always put on this brave face," Banks tells *Billboard*. "I think it takes greater strength to be vulnerable than it is to pretend to be strong all the time."

This realization has been hard-earned for the 26-year old singer and adds an entirely new depth to the track, which originally appeared on Banks' 2015 EP *The Paradox*. Bringing back such a deep track for his upcoming debut album *The Village* -- due out in Spring 2018 -- is a nice nod to the past before moving forward. For Banks, it means getting another pass at an early cut from his catalogue and "really give it heart and soul, which is what I always wanted it to have."

"I can write a song today and something can happen later down the line that gives that song new meaning to me," Banks says. "Before when I wrote it, it was purely about a relationship. Now it has a more intimate meaning to me... now when I sing ["Unknown"] I think about my relationship with my family and my dad specifically."

The delicate situation in the video is handled with an amount care and attention that only someone as invested as Jacob could infuse. Along with the writing credit, he served as a co-director with "[Chainsmoking](#)" collaborator FRMWRKLDN.

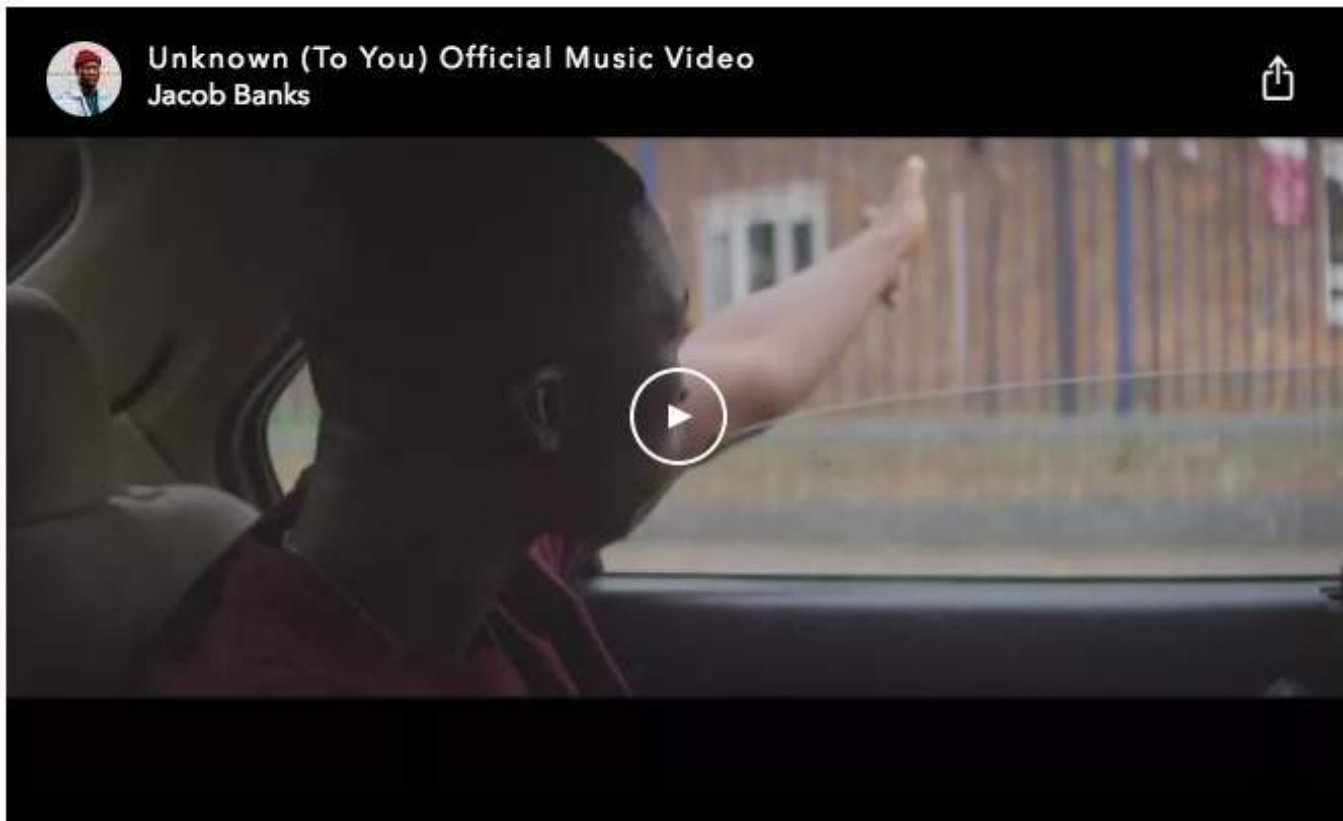
"I make music because I want to express myself. So expression allows me to dive into other things like...I could direct a music video," Banks says. "For me, it was just an extension of myself."

As if to extend himself even further, this fall finds Banks on his first headlining tour with stops in North America and Europe. The top billing doesn't appear to have disconnected him from his humble roots as he looks ahead. "I started making music to impress my friends so I consider anyone that listens to my stuff as people that could possibly be my friends," he explains. "I'm going around to see all my friends across the world and sing songs with them."

At the top of his list of tour destinations is his hometown show in Birmingham, U.K. on Dec. 13. Additional tour information can be found on his website [here](#).



Check out the video for "Unknown (To You)" below.



<http://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/pop/7988600/jacob-banks-unknown-to-you-video>

# VI

## Jacob Banks' "Unknown (To You)" Video Explores The Fragile Thread Of A Father-Son Relationship



Budding U.K. singer and songwriter, Jacob Banks, is trying a new hat on for size. For the visuals accompanying his sobering song "Unknown (To You)," Banks entered the writer's room and then took a seat in the director's chair (alongside co-director FRMWRKLDN).

The mini-film, if you will, follows the strained relationship between a father and his young adult son. As they move throughout their day, both are unable to express the things they really want to say to each other in ways that make sense. The disconnect between them is tangible, and due to the father's hardness, the son feels a certain sense of abandonment.



"It can be difficult for men to express their emotions and convey affection, but no one ever talks about it," Jacob said. "It's a masculinity thing but also a cultural thing, and I think many—especially those who grew up in immigrant households—will relate to the dynamic between the father and son in the video. My dad is an immigrant, and even though he is present in my everyday life and I know he cares about me, it's hard for him to show his love as a parent."

"Unknown (To You)" is the first single from his forthcoming *The Village* album. Watch the somber video above.

<https://www.vibe.com/2017/10/jacob-banks-unknown-to-you-video/>



## JACOB BANKS REVEALS HOW A BURGLARY HELPED SHAPE HIS MUSIC CAREER

Cat lover, non-vegan, healthy hairline owner—[Jacob Banks](#) is many things, but the Nigerian-born, British soul singer is first and foremost an artist. Despite having plans to study civil engineering, the 26-year-old "fell into music" six years ago and has since turned heads for his striking blend of electronic beats and old-school blues.

"I bought a guitar, taught myself how to play off Youtube. I was living with two of my friends at the time, and our house got burgled. And all [the robbers] left was the guitar, so I was left to play this guitar by force," he half-jokes. "So I must."

While he often incorporates EDM sounds into his songwriting, Banks emphasized the importance of always highlighting his soul roots.

"I don't want to sound like an EDM artist singing over soul. I want to sound like a soul artist who's taken modern elements," he explains. "It's a weird balance. If one tips too much, it can go left-of-center quite quickly...I always have to make sure there's more soul than there is the modern stuff."

Check out Jacob Banks' new single "[Unknown \(To You\)](#)" and his [The Boy Who Cried Freedom](#) EP from earlier this year. Be on the lookout for his [Into the Wild tour](#) hitting the U.S. this fall.

Below, check out Fuse's interview with British trio [London Grammar](#) at [Lollapalooza 2017](#), where they discussed New York vs. Chicago pizza and recording their latest album *Truth Is a Beautiful Thing*.

<https://www.fuse.tv/videos/2017/09/jacob-banks-guitar-burglary-music-influences-interview>



## EXCLUSIVE! Let Jacob Banks' Soulful Vocals On 50 Shades Freed Track Diddy Bop Completely Melt You!

2/08/2018 2:20 PM ET | Filed under: [Exclusives!](#) • [Music Minute](#) • [Film Flickers](#) • [Rita Ora](#) • [50 Shades Of Grey](#) • [Liam Payne](#)

Like 11 Reactions



*Fifty Shades Freed* finally hits theaters on Friday, but what's even better?? The film's soundtrack drops then, too!

While we've already heard [Rita Ora](#) and [Liam Payne's](#) *For You*, among some of the other singles straight off the album releasing tomorrow, there's one you haven't heard yet that you absolutely NEED to!

If you're into soulful, sultry vocals, you'll be way into [Jacob Banks'](#) new song with [Louis The Child](#), *Diddy Bop*!

Especially as Jacob explained about the track:

"*Diddy Bop* for me is just about celebrating life and getting lost in a moment."

We could use a bit of that right now!! Listen to the **EXCLUSIVE** premiere (below):

S10

REUNION - NEW YORK

Cookie policy ▶ 28



NOVEMBER 29, 2017 / MUSIC

By  
[Zachary Sniderman](#)

Photography by  
Andrew Vowles

*Styling by Jason Hughes at LGA  
Management. Grooming by Roxanne  
Attard. Photographer's assistants: Willow  
Williams and Mark Simpson. Stylist's  
assistant: Nathan Henry. Production by  
Rovee Production.*

## JACOB BANKS

Jacob Banks will tell you that he is an emotional bastard. He will insist on it. That's the purpose of art, in a way: to exercise the creative spirit and exorcise some collective demons. Musicians need to be heard. Musicians like Banks need an audience, he says, to complete the artistic circle. That's why he's a bastard, he thinks—because he's taking something from you.

But Banks is a shadowboxer, a passionate artist with a mercurial identity even despite a cold, jet lag, and full days rehearsing in a Brooklyn studio at the end of the N/W subway line.

"My songs evolve on stage," Banks says. "I don't really know what I'm doing most of the time. You just have to hope for the best and you might stumble upon a note or a riff that's different. By the time I finish the tour, the songs I wrote end up having so much more life."

His first full and proper album, *The Village*, which will be released in three installments early next year, was refined on the road, where the heart of his music is developed. While Banks, even hunched over on a vinyl couch outside the practice room, still gives off a quiet swagger—"People ask me, 'Do you ever get nervous?' I'm like, 'Why the fuck would I be nervous?' I know what I can do. You paid money, you don't know what's going to happen."—it is perhaps a cover for how much each word, note, and moment really means to him.

"Performing-wise, I always give my all, every time," he says. "Time is the most valuable thing we have. We can never get time back. If you're taking your time to hear my music, to come hear me, I'll give everything I have."





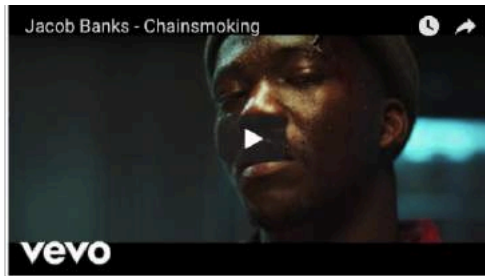
Born in Nigeria and raised in England, Banks came to music all at once and relatively late. His star was quickly recognized while doing open mic nights in Birmingham in 2011. Accolades followed, including winning the Adidas "Are You In" competition, a featured song in FIFA 15, showcases at Lollapalooza and SXSW, and a performance as the first unsigned act to appear on BBC Radio 1 Live Lounge. Tours followed with Léon and supporting Alicia Keys. Banks's music bucks conventional definitions of genre, allowing him to stretch across opportunities. It's also reflective of his worldview. "My first real introduction to music was around age twelve. I found Disney soundtracks to be my first love," he recalls. "Then YouTube came and I found all of these songs. That's how I found hip hop. I listened to Kanye West as much as I listened to Al Green, Rick Ross as much as I listened to Miles Davis. They're all as important as one another to me."

To listen to Banks is to get a sense of this twisting musical path. In a broad sense, he operates as a soul vocalist with a joyous disrespect for genre. His songs deal with topics of love and loss but with nuance and a spiraling lyrical structure that revels in tearing apart words, then circling back to add meaning and heft. Banks's phone is littered with lists of words that have hit him in his gut. He works with ideas, using those words—"Monster," "Grace," "Rainy Day"—as a launching point. Rhythm is the strongest through line for Banks; his songs twist from the hymnal and trap notes of "Chainsmoking" to the piano ballad "Silver Lining" and the swinging bluegrass of "Unholy War," but each one flits in and around the expected time signatures. Banks's music feels as if it is perpetually leaning forward, off balance and unpredictable. That space allows his clear and yearning delivery to rise up through the beat and encompass each song.

As an artist, Banks is careful not to fit too neatly into any box. "Being a musician is really weird because you have this freedom to make anything you want, but people only want to hear one thing, and it always baffles me, because you never tell anyone from any walk of life to do just one thing," he says.

Serious as he is about his work, Banks has a playful side as well. "I always wait for this feeling in my stomach," he says of knowing when a song is just right. "Every time I feel it, I know it's good. My stomach tells me, or I could just be hungry. I can never tell the difference."





A gut is an important thing when the truth of your work is paramount. Against convention—and the advice of his management—he’s cut entire songs from his sets if he can’t believably realize them on stage. “I know it resonates with so many people, but I’m just like, ‘I can’t sing these words, ever again,’” says Banks. “Everyone’s like, ‘You should’ve performed that.’ Mm, no. Just no. I will not sing those words. It’s not that it’s poor, it’s that it’s no longer my truth.”

Sometimes that truth can be just as elusive as the artist seeking it. Instances of real happiness are cherished by Banks, who records each one in his phone as much for his spirit as for his craft. “I always try to document every moment where I felt content,” Banks says, flipping through a note on his phone. “I always try to write it down, the exact moment where that happened. It doesn’t always happen. I think I had about six in the last year. It’s just a single moment. The next day it could be, ‘Fuck everybody! Fucking cunts.’ But it’s just a single moment when it’s just bliss. I just want to hold onto this for a little longer.”

Even a tired Banks—and Banks is tired—is a live wire, attuned to the energies around him and, with a wry eye, ready to speak boldly about his passions and drive a smile out of those near to him.

Despite the sometimes “torture” of getting his gut to agree with his mind, Banks is willing to put in the indefinite, precious time for everything to be just right. “The music will come,” he affirms. “Something will come. It could be shit, but there will be something. I’m trying to stay open.”

*Jacob Banks performs tonight at Bowery Ballroom, New York, and tomorrow at Rough Trade, Brooklyn.*

