

CASH

THE BIRTH OF
THE BROOKLYN
COWBOY

Leather Jacket, Pants
STYLIST ARCHIVE
Black Vest LOVE KHAOS
@lovekhaosdesigns

Leather Jacket
STYLIST ARCHIVE

Photographer VIKTORIJA PASHUTA @viktorija_pashuta
Director/Cinematographer/Editor JOSHUA M. CHÉRIE CHERY @m.cherie_
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Special Thank You THE AGENCY STUDIOS @agencystudios

Words by
KIANI SHABAZZ

Labinot “Larry” Gashi, better known as GASHI, is a no-holds-barred referential artist who has drawn from a medley of influences in music, fashion, classic film, and American popular culture since he arrived in New York’s creative community with his debut project *4Play*. Born in Africa to Albanian parents, GASHI’s journey to the United States exposed the wide-eyed dream chaser to the rich cultural tapestry of New York City. America’s mecca of hip-hop culture, fine arts, and luxury fashion forged the multi-hyphenate creative known as the “Brooklyn Cowboy.”

GASHI’s eclectic style and genre-bending sound are a reflection of his anomalous origin story. Throughout his career, the now Los Angeles-based artist seamlessly merged influences of dancehall, hip-hop, and pop music. Unforeseen to many, GASHI’s foray into a country-western aesthetic encapsulates an immigrant’s yearning for the American dream. With the release of his album *Brooklyn Cowboy*, GASHI fully embraces a new era as he reflects on his creative journey, Kosovo Albanian roots, and love for classic Americana fashion. GASHI’s ethos of pushing boundaries through music, style, and art has carved out a space in the industry that is completely authentic to himself and undeniably alluring to those around him.

You were born in Africa to Albanian parents who traveled to 24 countries before settling down in New York to chase the American dream. How has your background shaped your identity, not only as an artist but as the individual you are today?

My background influences a lot of the music I make. I’m able to be versatile and not have barriers while not being confined to a specific genre. I’m true to this, I’m not new to this. I’ve been to so many places, and I have had no culture shock. I’ve experienced life in so many ways. I feel like I’m 95 years old. I’ve been blessed enough to experience a lot of countries, cultures, and different vibes that just spill into my music.

You recently mentioned that dancehall icon Ricky Blaze was your favorite artist while growing up amidst New York City’s vibrant hip-hop culture, art scene, and fashion community. How much has the city’s rich culture influenced you as an artist?

I grew up on HOT 97 mixtapes. My brother and I would walk down to Church Avenue in Brooklyn. We would get these new mixtapes every Friday and pay \$5 for them. It would be all the hottest new songs in the city. Growing up in New York, I always kept in touch with what was hot and what was not. That’s why I love pop music, hip-hop, and all other genres, and that’s reflected in my music. I grew up on DMX and JAY-Z, and that also influenced my music. I loved all the artists from New York because they had such a huge impact on the culture.

You called Ralph Lauren your “dad” for his influence on your style. Can you speak on your love for Ralph Lauren, RRL, and the impact that classic Americana fashion has on your personal style?

I mean, bro, I’m wearing RRL jeans right now, with a white

button-down from RRL and Timberlands. I’m wearing a snapback right now that says *Sopranos* on it. I feel like Ralph Lauren made it okay for somebody from New York to tap into that country-western style. Ralph is a real New Yorker, not some dude from the countryside. He’s the reason I wear white jeans all the time. His influence on my style is next level. It’s like when Kanye said, ‘It ain’t Ralph, though!’ There’s really levels to this.

While we’re on the topic of this urban cowboy trend in fashion, what did you think of Pharrell Williams’ fall/winter Louis Vuitton show?

I really love Pharrell. I haven’t been the biggest fan of Louis Vuitton for a while. I think there’s been way too many logos, and I’m not a logo guy. I have a special nail clipper that I use to rip the logos off all my clothes. You will never see me wearing a logo. I think they’re cheap. You shouldn’t be walking around like a human billboard. I don’t find it tasteful and I think they’ve been very heavy with logos, which is a turn-off for me. So, I’m very happy [Pharrell] went for the urban cowboy route. I don’t think many people were expecting that and it was extremely brave. The fact that he did it at the same time all these artists were going country, he was able to see where music and the culture were going. I’m proud of him. He’s proof you can be an incredible musician while being creative in other mediums. I’m so damn happy I can live in the same time as Pharrell.

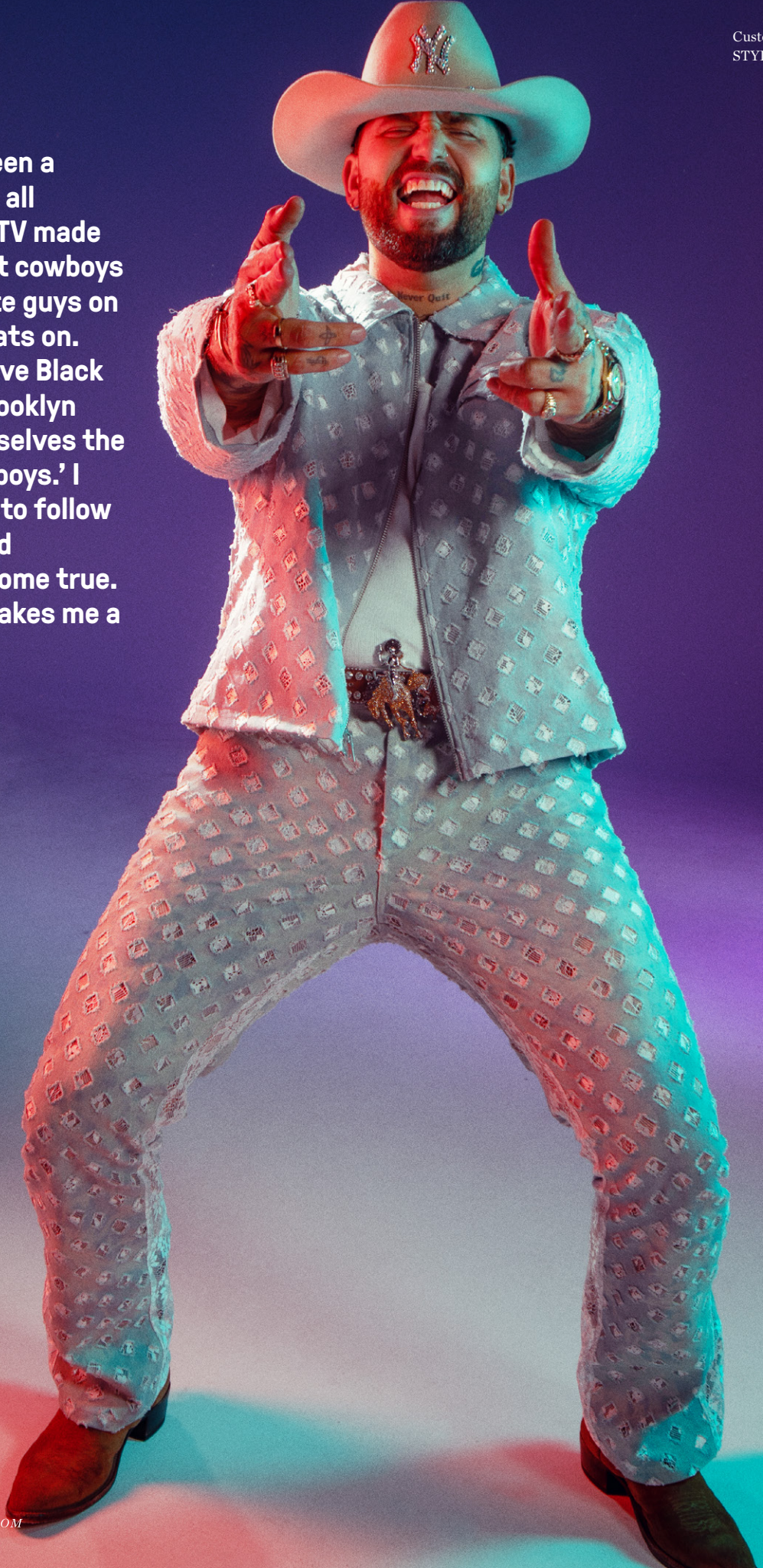
You’ve also shown love to New York-based contemporary Americana brands like Aimé Leon Dore and were previously a brand ambassador for Problem Child NYC. Are there any other NY brands you’ve had your eyes on lately?

I was the first person to wear Aimé in Europe. You can ask Teddy Santis, the owner of the brand. They would give me

Jacket MANNATT GUPTA
@labelmannattgupta
Button Up, Tie GIVENCHY
@givenchy
Pants STYLIST ARCHIVE

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“I’ve always been a cowboy. We’re all cowboys. The TV made us believe that cowboys were just white guys on horses with hats on. I mean, you have Black cowboys in Brooklyn who call themselves the ‘Brooklyn Cowboys.’ I traveled west to follow my dreams and I made them come true. That’s what makes me a cowboy.”



Custom Denim Set, Belt
STYLIST ARCHIVE



Jacket MANNATT GUPTA
@labelmannattgupta
Button Up, Tie GIVENCHY
@givenchy
Pants STYLIST ARCHIVE



Jacket MANNATT GUPTA
@labelmannattgupta
Button Up, Tie, Shoes
GIVENCHY @givenchy
Pants STYLIST ARCHIVE

pieces for free. I’ve never paid for Aimé. I’ve been a very, very, very early believer in Aimé. I love Aimé and Teddy is a good friend of mine. I believe they recently signed over to LVMH. I’m happy he’s getting his paper.

Any brands outside of New York that you’ve been loving?

My favorite brand right now is Coût De La Liberté. That’s the only brand I love right now. They’re based out in L.A. It was started by Jeffrey Lubell from True Religion. I’ve never been so obsessed with a brand or spent this kind of money on a brand, other than Ralph Lauren. I just spent \$20,000 on flared jeans because I needed all 20 pairs. It’s the hottest brand out right now. It fits right in with my western-style music and the “Brooklyn Cowboy” aesthetic. I don’t regret anything I buy from them.

Can you speak on the Albanian-Gypsy culture you grew up in and how that inspired your “Brooklyn Cowboy” persona and transition to country music?

I’ve always been a cowboy. We’re all cowboys. The TV made us believe that cowboys were just white guys on

horses with hats on. I mean, you have Black cowboys in Brooklyn that call themselves the “Brooklyn Cowboys.” I traveled west to follow my dreams and I made them come true. That’s what makes me a cowboy.

You left your dream condo in L.A. to record your upcoming album in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, after watching a documentary on the town’s rich history of soul, blues, and rock ‘n’ roll recorded at FAME Studios. Can you speak on your decision to do this?

I mean, at the time, I was dating the biggest pop star in the world. After we broke up, I decided that L.A. was a weird, empty place for me and I needed something new. I wanted to see what the city of Muscle Shoals was going to create for me. So, I watched the documentary and fell in love with it. I saw that all my favorite artists recorded there and wanted to know what the city had to offer. We really tapped into the beautiful magic of Muscle Shoals.

In a recent interview, you spoke about living up to your given name Labinot, which translates to “a good voice,” and how this inspired you to sing more on the new record. Your surname is a powerful

name as well. Can you speak on the last name “Gashi” and its history with the Albanian people?

In this world, we work to bring honor to our last name, not our first name. It’s very important for people to know my family name, my father’s name, my roots. A lot of people you meet don’t know where they come from. They don’t know their family history. If you don’t know where you come from, you won’t know where you’re going.

In short, describe the album *Brooklyn Cowboy*.

Brooklyn Cowboy is Ralph Lauren, Biggie Smalls, Johnny Cash, Tom Petty, and Bruce Springsteen all in one room.

What’s next for GASHI?

We are partnering with ALEXSUCKS to sign them to a major label. I’m excited to continue to work with them and see where the universe takes them. As far as me, I’m getting ready to tour this album. I just had a show at the Troubadour and we sold out in L.A. last night. This “Brooklyn Cowboy” thing isn’t going away. **B**