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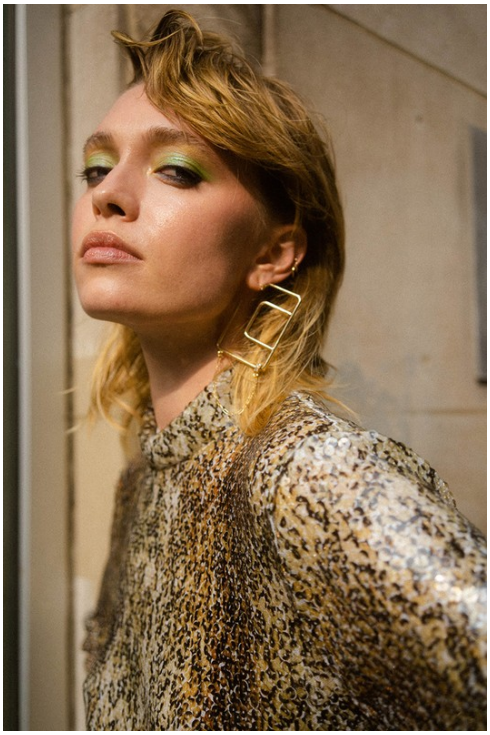

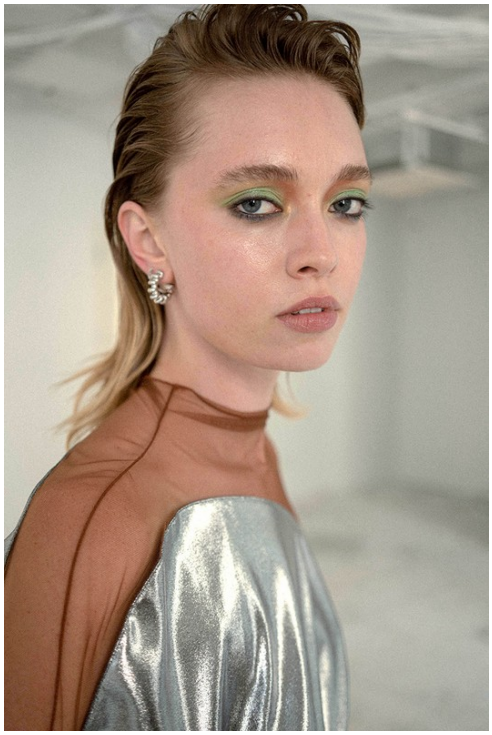

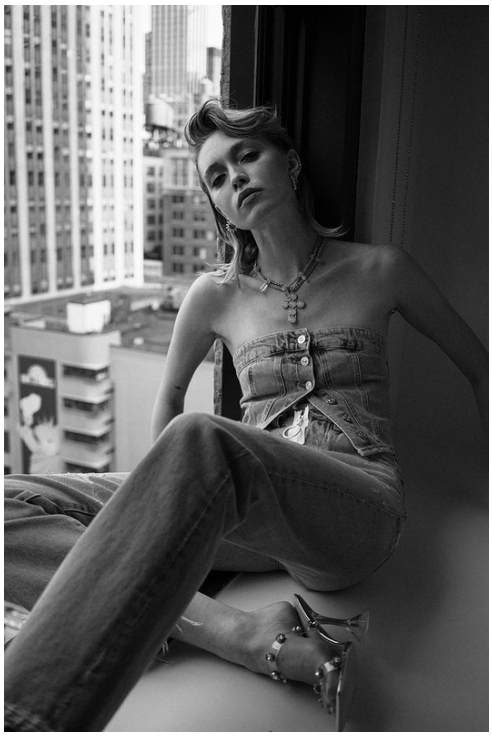

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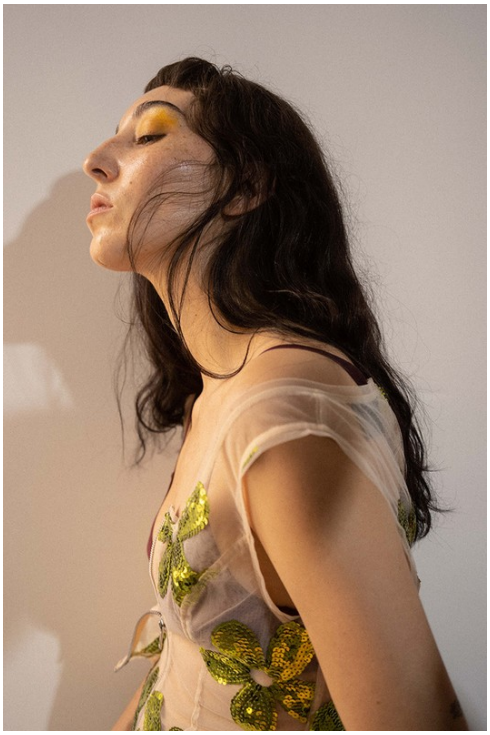

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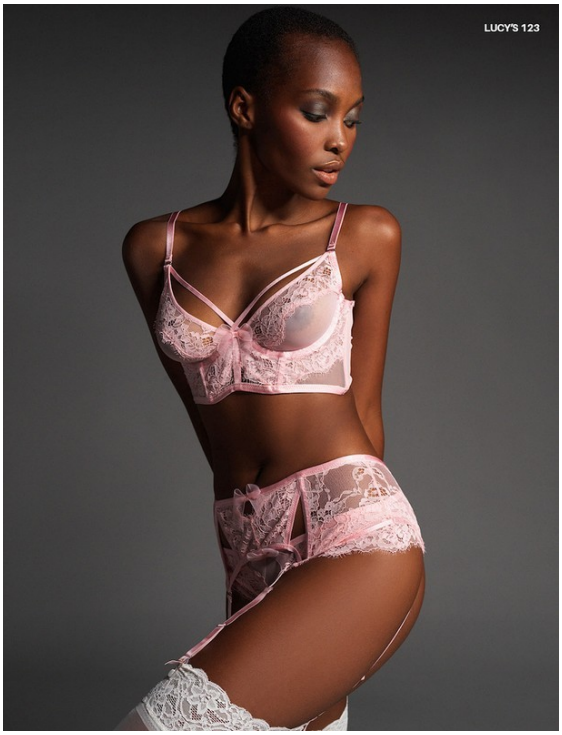

Somewhere between
BLACK AND WHITE

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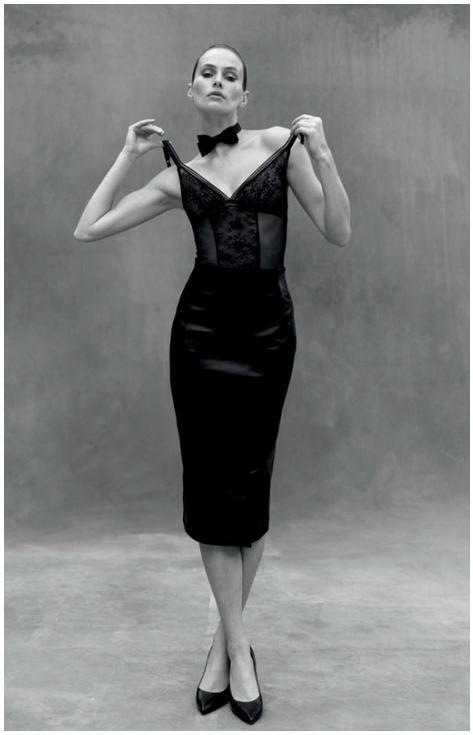

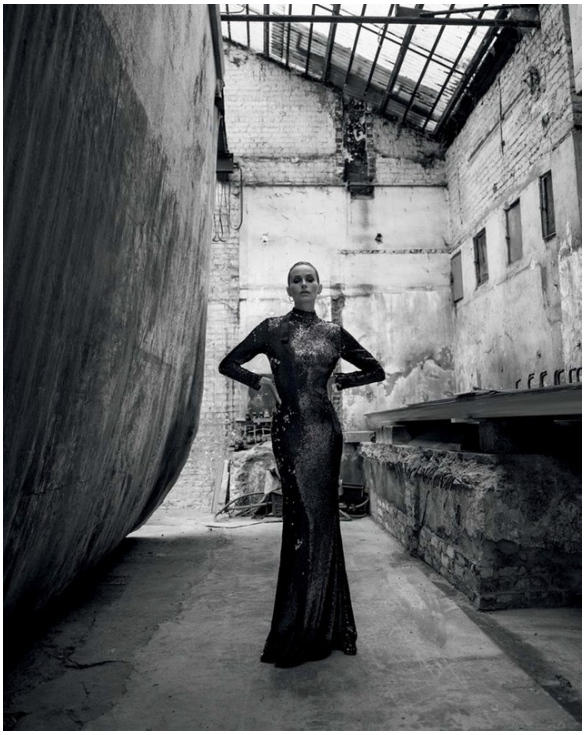

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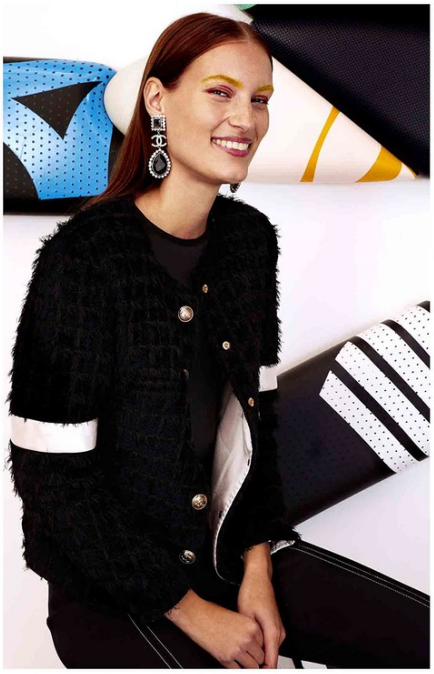

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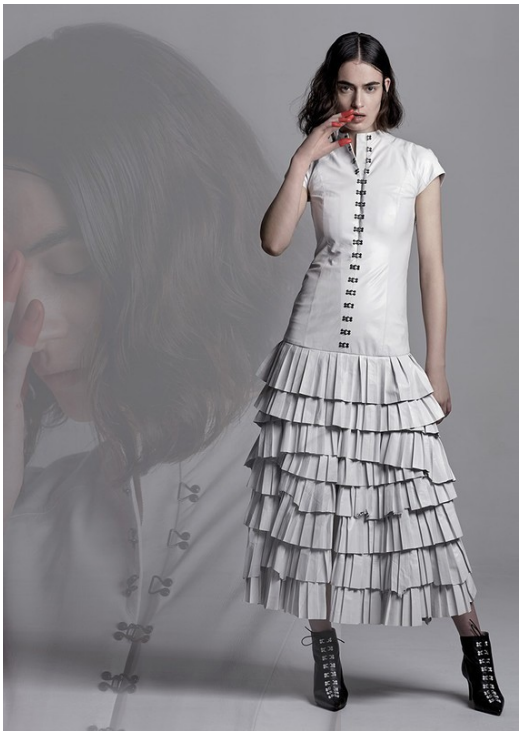

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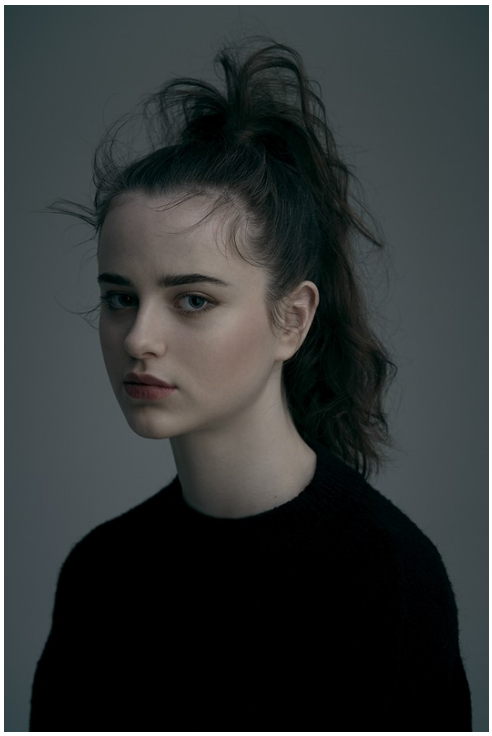

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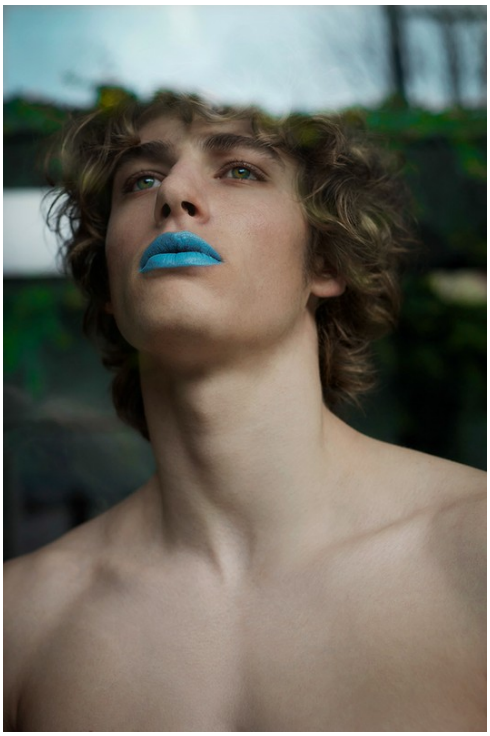

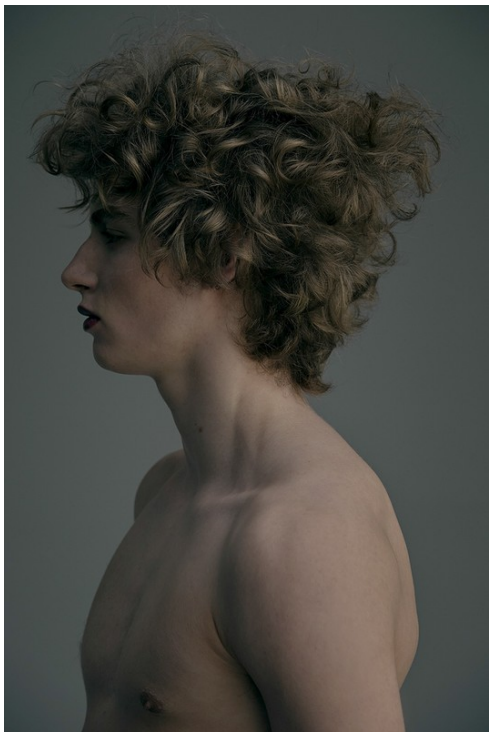

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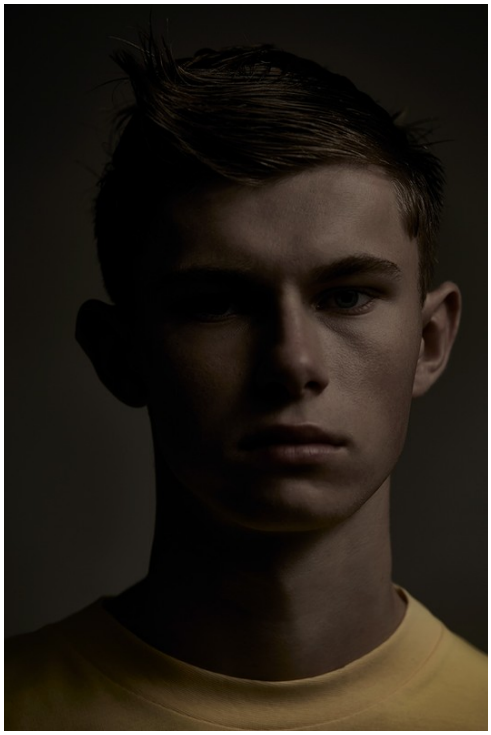

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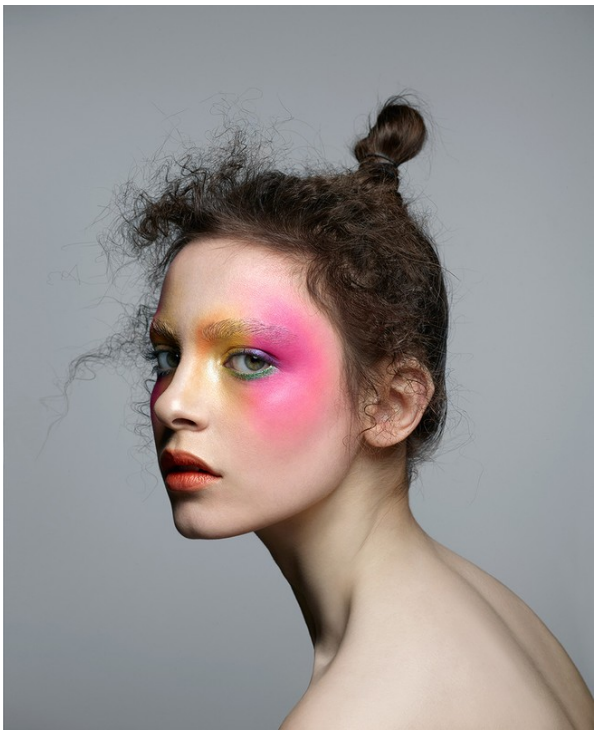

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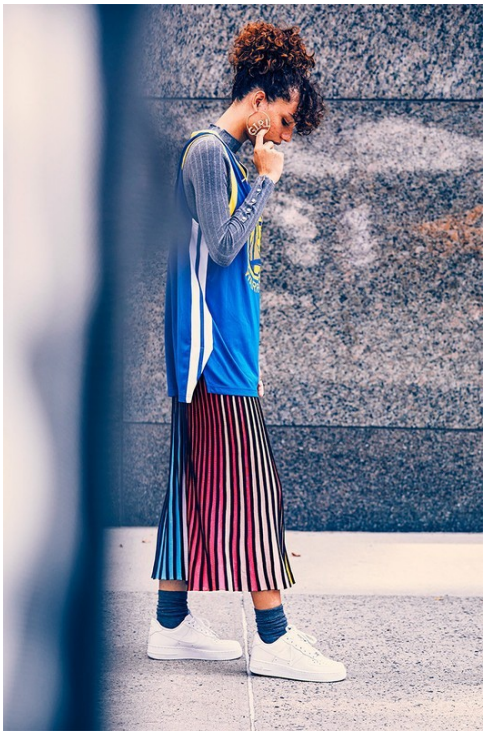

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ALWAYS RYUICHI

ON THE EVE OF A NEW ALBUM, OUT IN MARCH, THE RENOWNED COMPOSER RYUICHI SAKAMOTO REFLECTS ON THE ETERNITY OF SOUND

PHOTOGRAPHS **RACHEL CHANDLER** FASHION **RON HARTLEBEN**
WORDS **RYUICHI SAKAMOTO** AS TOLD TO **DOMINIC TEJA SIDHU**

Transformation is a very real impulse that is inherent in nature. I like transformation, ever since I was a child. Maybe from the third grade or so, every time I came home from school, I was staring at the mirror not understanding what I was seeing or why I was looking. I used to just stare, in my Japanese state of mind, for a long time—not a practice, just a habit. What is this abnormality? What is this thing called Ryuichi?

Once I put on my mother's lipstick, she was very angry. Another time I tied my father's favorite tie around my neck, but it was too long, so I took scissors and cut it in half. In college, sometimes I would wear my girlfriend's outfits. (I was probably the first musician in Japan to wear a skirt on stage in the '80s.) I did makeup. I had a makeup box I would take with me—it was my everyday tradition. Beauty is and has always been my interest—beauty as the strange mix of tastes you like: what kind of sound you hear, what kind of face you wear.

I used to be in love with my bad side, but two years ago I battled cancer, so I have been trying not to enjoy and exaggerate my bad side so much. All the negative qualities will help the cancer, I thought! It's kind of my joke. But it's not really this tendency that caused the problem. I have always had all these small brains inside my head. I don't have a big brain, I have 25 small brains—or it could be less, maybe 12—many small personalities. I go back and forth between them and my personality changes. Sometimes, it's a persona or a character, sometimes I become pure machinery in the form of a man. I flip an internal switch, like robotics. Whatever the situation requires, I turn the switch from one brain to another. It can last for one second—very quick—or much longer. But particularly after healing the disease, I have had to learn to become one person, with all those different dimensions—only one. I used to have so many options, different moments and gears, but now I'm just one person with different layers inside of me.

I have a method to my music. According to this method, it's easy for me to write conventional music. I'm trained. But I am now resisting the method—I want no method. When I decided this, I didn't know where I should start, so I tried many different things. One of the things I tried is, as soon as I wake up in the morning, as usual I hear some pitch, some note. Sometimes it's a piece of music, existing music like Mozart, or sometimes something unknown, just a tone. So I listen to me, inside, and there's a pitch, and I start creating, to tune my sixth sense to the pitch I'm hearing inside. Then, if I like, I add another pitch to go along with it. This morning I heard a pitch when I was chanting. When you

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