**Michael Aldag biography**

Meet Michael Aldag: a singer and a songwriter (but not a singer-songwriter), a producer, an accidental TikTok star and — let’s not beat around the bush here — every inch a total popstar. At just 19 his prodigious knack for observational tunesmithery vividly captures life’s joys, sorrows, and confusing inbetween bits. !My music’s for anybody who feels slightly-to-constantly overwhelmed and unsure of who they are, flailing around in this massive ridiculous world,” he states. “When I feel like I’m in a clouded headspace I can go and write, and by the time I’m done I’ll have a better idea of how I feel, even if what I’ve made is not a particularly good song.”

The better you get to know Michael the more you’ll get used to his self-effacing turns of phrase but, for the record, his songs really are particularly good. Since uploading his debut single Entitled in 2019 he’s released a barrage of songs combining razor-sharp lyrics that recall Lily Allen, Lorde and The Streets, with fresh beats that see 80s synthpop through the prism of 21st Century existential angst. Somewhere among it all, Michael says, are some unexpected influences. There’s Marina & The Diamonds, whose music Michael’s dad would often play in the car on family trips, while his penchant for an anthemic chorus could give Bastille or The Killers a run for their money. !I remember seeing The Killers at the Echo Arena a few years back,” Michael adds. “And when I saw Brandon with his foot on the monitor I just thought: ‘Okay. Wow. That is exactly what I want to do.’”

Home for Michael is West Kirby (but he won’t be mad if you say he’s from Liverpool). He describes West Kirby as “a quaint seaside town” and “very nice” and “probably a good place to raise your children”, which is a very diplomatic way of saying... A little bit boring. But if the last half century of pop has told us anything it’s that these places that are nothing to write home about — even when they literally are home — so often give artists something to tell the world about, and that’s true of Michael’s minutiae-obsessed lyricism, packed with snapshots of the faces and places he’s encountered.

While Michael takes an episodic approach to his songwriting, the vignettes he captures in songs like Arrogance, Divorce and Conversation collectively tell a far bigger story. He’s particularly interested, he says, in examining the “the way people present themselves, as opposed to who they actually are”. His smartly-observed tunes seem to exist in that space in between fiction and reality, with lyrics that are simultaneously exquisitely honed and incredibly conversational. You’ll hear flashes in tracks like Hockey Practice (one of the first ever pop songs to reference calamari), Snapchat (!I loved your private story, but you're actually so boring”), and Trust Funds. They’re commentaries, Michael says, “on how the area that I've been brought up in, and the people I've been brought up around, have affected me.”

Michael started singing at age six, with a towel on his head. At the time he was a shepherd knocking out Silent Night (!a banger for the ages, by all accounts”) in a school play, which led to the school choir and eventually an opportunity to join the Liverpool Philharmonic Youth Choir. This, in turn, saw Michael performing at London’s Royal Albert Hall. “It’s absolutely criminal how oblivious I

was to performing in an iconic venue,” he groans today. “These days I see footage of bands on that legendary stage and I think: ‘I was there once, but all I was interested in was how long it would be until it was all over and we could go to Pizza Express’.” There was another sticking point, too — one more important than the distant call of dough balls. “To be honest having to sing Benjamin Britten songs was something I really disliked,” he reflects today. “We were talking about fields of hay. I’d never even seen a field of hay. Fields of hay said nothing to me about about my life.”

Looking for an opportunity to sing songs that truly resonated, Michael took matters into his own hands. First he tried acoustic guitar, but quickly decided it wasn’t for him. “I just thought, ‘What am I doing fiddling around with an acoustic guitar in the hope of sounding half decent when I could press a key on a synth and sound instantly amazing?’” So he blew his savings on a tiny MIDI keyboard, a microphone and a pop filter, plugged the lot into the laptop he’d got for his birthday, experimented with GarageBand then moved on to Logic. “That setup was pretty much it,” he reports. “And that’s all it still is, really.”

This may be pop made in a bedroom, but brand it ‘bedroom pop’ at your peril. The ambition of Michael’s music reaches far beyond the four walls of a West Kirby box room: it’s anthemic, global, main-stage music you can sing your heart out to. Or as Michael himself imagines it: !You’re on a cliff somewhere, you're hanging on with one hand and you"re reaching for something else with the other: you"re crying out for redemption.” He pauses. “I mean, I suppose you could say it"s quite melodramatic. But the point is, I"m not making niche music. I"d love to headline Glastonbury.”

He’s well on his way, working from strong foundations built by, as Michael puts it, “hoovering up Liverpool"s talent development projects”. These include a place on the Liverpool branch of the Levi’s Music Project, a music accelerator scheme that saw him performing at fashion launches in Brussels and Barcelona, and a spot at the LIMF Academy, which selects and supports Merseyside- based artists. During this time he’s been recording a steady stream of music, from Entitled (a pointed critique of social media’s performative mental health discourse), to newer music like Killers-influenced banger Polaroid and Tonsillitis, which came about during a bleak period in 2020 when Michael lost a close family member then soon after discovered his girlfriend had been cheating on him. !I was very low and very alone, but these days I can go back to that song and think: #Well, that was how bad I was feeling then, and now I"m feeling better about it’ — it"s a good port of call for any difficult future situations I find myself in.”

Michael’s frank, idiosyncratic way of viewing life has already struck the right note on TikTok, where tens of millions of views have sent him well on his way to half a million followers. Michael first downloaded the app in lower-sixth, and made an inauspicious debut. “I’m glad my TikToks didn’t get any traction to start with because looking at photos of the time I looked like a King Charles spaniel,” he accepts now. “I was posting things I thought would click, but they definitely didn’t.”

Until, that is, they definitely did. One big moment came when he posted while working at a spa checking hot tub-obsessed pensioners’ temperatures in 2020. A strange way to find an audience,

perhaps, but his TikTok bio — “I MAKE MUSIC - CHECK IT OUT” — leaves no doubt where his passion truly lies. And when you go in search of that music you’ll find another bio, on streaming services, that promises: “If you like hearing ginger boys whining over some synths then you’re going to love me.” Totally Michael Aldag.

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