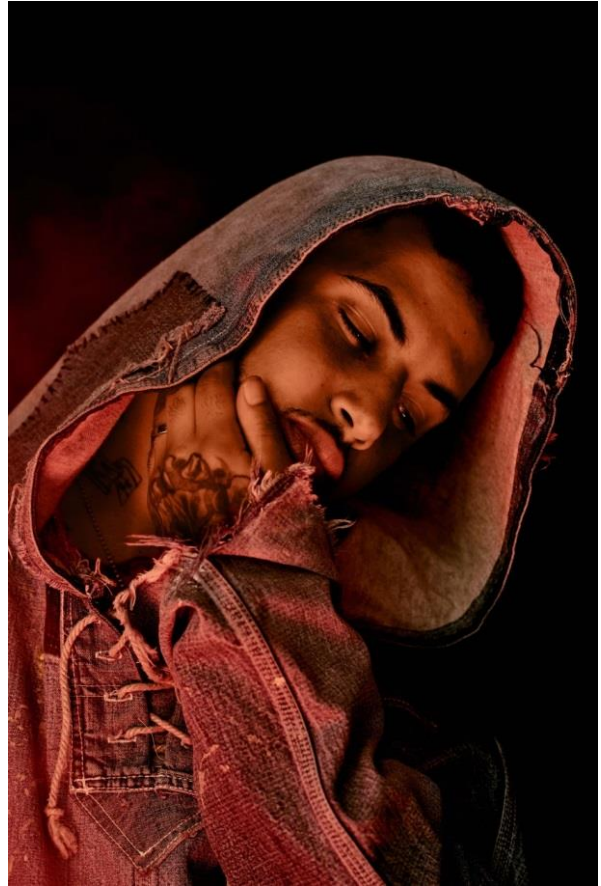


# AMIR OBÈ

Detroit native and Brooklyn transplant Amir Obè - a rapper, singer and producer Complex recently branded as a 'force' – recently released his Def Jam debut EP “None Of The Clocks Work.” Sonically rich, awash with dark synths and thunderous drums, the EP is brimming with vulnerability and emotional sincerity. Songs like the afflicitive “Cigarettes” and “Yellow Lights” break down the stereotype of the strong silent man. In a field overrun with macho bravado and empty boasts, Obè is a rare, refreshing find, a talent unafraid to lay bare his heart.

In February 2015, Obè co-produced, “Star 67” on Drake’s surprise mixtape If You’re Reading This It’s Too Late. Seizing on the moment, Obè recruited features from longtime friend Partynextdoor and dropped two EPs, Happening in the Grey Area and Won’t Find Love in the Hills. The records sent a tremor through the music industry, with XXL commending his commitment to “substance over selling out” and the Fader praising his music as “dreamy, sad and sensuous.”

Four years later, with a Def Jam deal in tow, that sort of forthrightness has not only freed him creatively, it’s found him a devoted legion of fans who’ve felt disconnected from the constant braggadocio and emotional void in mainstream urban music. In being himself, flaws and all, he’s actually given them the confidence to do the same.



*“We knew Amir Obè was having a moment. We just didn’t realize it’d be quite so prolific.”* **noisey**

*“Dreamy and sensuous”*  
**FADER**

*“Detroit-native Amir Obè has been making plenty of noise”*

**COMPLEX**

# Schön!

## interview | amir obè

<http://schonmagazine.com/interview-amir-obe/>



Amir Obè is the Detroit singer-songwriter you ought to know. With a sound reminiscent of R&B stars Bryson Tiller and Partynextdoor, Obè's voice seamlessly flows over atmospheric beats marked by slick and polished production. His career first blossomed during the Myspace era, where under the pseudonym Phreshy Duzit, he posted weekly freestyles enjoyed by his 100 000 fans. Label offers soon came rolling in leading to a coveted deal with Atlantic Records. After parting ways with the label in 2011, Obè reinvented himself and was back on the radar with the release of his 2014 mixtape *Detrooklyn*. Drake was such a fan that Obè soon found himself co-producing the track *Star67* on Drake's wildly popular mixtape *If You're Reading This It's Too Late*. Newly signed to Def Jam Recordings, Obè sits down with Schön! for a quick-fire Q&A to discuss working with a new label and what fans can expect from his upcoming album.

### **What was the music scene like growing up in Detroit?**

I always credit Detroit in having a very authentic & homegrown scene. People take pride of the culture there, especially in music.

**When did you start making music?**

I started making music when I was finishing up my last year in high school. I've been writing creatively since I was eight, but my first attempt at making a song wasn't until I was about to graduate high school.



**What inspires your songwriting? Do you pull from experience or imagination?**

I'm usually inspired to write by experience, but the songs always take an imaginative shape. I think my best music is made when I incorporate both.

**Are there any artists who inspire you sonically?**

I've always liked the analog sound, hearing the sonics of Quincy and Michael Jackson, or Queen, or Phil Collins always pushed my producer and I to get that warmth and cohesiveness.

**What pushed you to move from your hometown to New York?**

I actually came to New York first to pursue a career path in fashion. I wanted to either go to FIT or Parsons to study design.

**The internet is responsible for some of the most popular artists right now, and you were first discovered on Myspace. Do you think it's become easier for musicians to break into the business?**

I think the internet changed everything. The artist can now communicate directly to fans by uploading content. I think talent still prevails, but the discovery process is way easier now.



**You're now signed after a span of independent work. What has working with Def Jam been like?**

It's been great, Def Jam takes pride in being authentic and so do I. The process has all been collaborative, nothing really changed from the independent grind, it just now feels as if I have more tools and resources to bring the vision to life.

**An album is in the works. Does your creative process start with the lyrics or melody first?**

I always go with melody first, melodically it has to connect with the production. Lyrics come later.



**What are you hoping fans take from the first listen of your new work – is there a message or vibe behind it?**

I love for the listener to create their own narrative based on what they hear and apply it to their life. I still listen to the project everyday and I notice something new about it every time. The project is a vibe.

**Lastly, any plans for the rest of 2017?**

The rest of 2017 I'll be releasing visuals, working on my first ever album and touring.

*Amir Obè's EP, None Of The Clocks Work Here, is out now.*



HIGHSNOBIETY

## For Amir Obè, the Third Time's the Charm for Stardom

<http://www.highsnobiety.com/2017/04/19/amir-obe-feature/>



If there's one truth about second chances, it is that the encore can lead to even bigger opportunities for fulfillment. Rarely in music do fans talk about an artist's third or fourth chance in their careers, yet here's Amir Obè thriving well into his next chapter after a musical pivot from Phreshy Duzit to his actual name, Amir Obeid. He signed to Def Jam Records in December 2016 after a run as an independent act, and some would consider that a victory lap.

On a rainy day in March, the 27-year-old rapper and singer invited media and tastemakers for a listening of his Def Jam debut, *None of the Clocks Work* (stylized as *NØTÇW*), at World of McIntosh in Soho. Hor d'oeuvres and specialty song-themed drinks are the norm for these experiences, but it's reading who is in the room that shows how far Obeid has come. Def Jam's top brass (Steve Bartels, the CEO; Chris Atlas, Executive Vice President of Marketing, and the label's publicists) were all there to support his fourth extended play.

Once listeners sat in bean bags and lounge chairs facing a McIntosh theater system, Bartels gave an impassioned speech about Obè's music, telling the audience to pay attention to the "sonic quality" of these "gems." He wanted everyone to get the same feeling he'd felt when he heard *Won't Find Love in the Hills* and tracks from *NØTÇW*, emphasizing Obè's focus on detail and songwriting.

Then it was Obè's turn to give a speech. He spoke about how he recorded, wrote, and composed the project with just his producer NYLZ in a little house in Detroit. "I really want to thank Def Jam for believing in the vision, just supporting everything that might've seemed farfetched in my mind, they met me halfway. I feel like we executed [my vision] fully," he said.



A few days after *NØTÇW*'s release on March 30, Amir tells me Def Jam has been courting him since his first headlining show in Manhattan at Highline Ballroom last August. After Bartels saw his show live, he met with Amir and his team in September and then again in December to finalize a deal. "He could understand the music on the level we created it. He understood it fully," he says of his decision to sign with Def Jam. "He was wowed by the production value and the attention to detail. That meeting, it was a big step."

But his fans know his history with major labels, specifically Atlantic Records, which he left in 2014. As Phreshy Duzit, the Brooklyn by way of Detroit artist made atmospheric, melodic music about relationships, the ethos of his output mirroring a *So Far Gone*-era Drake. He dabbled in production and rapping, but mostly worked with NYLZ who has been collaborating with him since his early project like *Brave New World* and *The New Religion*. He says of his time on Atlantic: "I feel like they were way more driven toward singles and having big records instead of pushing for a story. They didn't care for me to have a sonic experience. They just wanted the big records."

From 2014 to now, Amir Obè went through an artistic rebirth. Sometimes you need to get rid of your distractions to find your purpose, and Obè spent the better part of 2014 on a journey of discovery. He says Phreshy Duzit was "a contrived character who was making cool music for

MySpace,” forgoing his former moniker so he could have “everything to feel authentic” and “feel 100 percent me.” Freshly removed from his Atlantic Records situation, he debuted as Amir Obè on *Detbrooklyn*, a whimsical tape with hard raps and choice influences from the city’s boroughs: Harlem – “Drugs & Cam’ron”; Brooklyn – “Jay Z, Kanye, Esco,” as well as Detroit via “Detroit Cartier.”



Of course, you can't forget about the time Drake's manager Oliver El-Khatib personally reached out to tell Obè that he was a fan of *Detbrooklyn*. When collaborations with PARTYNEXTDOOR hit SoundCloud, OVO stans believed he was the newest artist on the roster. Their work on songs like “Truth for You” and “I’m Good” fueled those rumors, while his appearance on Drake's “Star67” from *If You're Reading This It's Too Late* gave the illusion he was one of those tent writers in Drizzy's studio camp. But Obè says his relationship with PND goes back to their Atlantic days when he was known as Jahron B. “We always talk so I know we're going to link up soon and share ideas and see where it goes,” he says of working together again. “I know we have huge songs that we never released, but yeah, we'll definitely work in the future. I'm sure of it.”

What did he think about those OVO conversations? “I think just me being close to them, showing up in pictures, and the collaboration with PARTY, people had their own assumptions. It never was on that level as far dealing with business. It's more about just being good friends with these guys and linking up when we can link up.”

An everlasting friendship it seems, as OVO continues to show Obè love: Oliver premiered his song “Naturally” in his mix on Noah “40” Shebib's birthday episode. It's because the songs on *NØTÇW* not only fit the darker shades of Drake's color palette, but Obè's lane of emotionally-charged rap ballads is clearly his own. “Wish You Well” is a bye-bye haters anthem for the Snapchat generation, and “Cigarettes” is the anxiety-reducing record about indulging in vices that you need in a dystopian America.





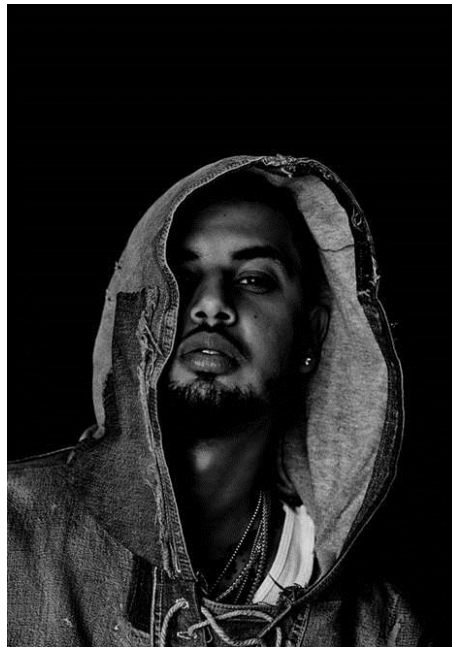
Amir Obeid spent significant years as Phreshy Duzit and you can't erase history. However, you can certainly rewrite it. Obè has built enough of a foundation as a trendsetter to be a diamond in the rough among his peers. A pending album with Def Jam is in the works, which will naturally write itself as Obè lives his life.

"With the album, I really want to experiment for myself. Do some songs where I can rap on. Melodically, take it somewhere else," he says. "I know NYLZ has different ideas. It's all about from now until then what my experiences will be. What memories I can create now to speak on when it is album time."



## Amir Obè Back With “None Of The Clocks Work”

[HTTP://WWW.VILLAGEVOICE.COM/MUSIC/AMIR-OBE-BACK-WITH-NONE-OF-THE-CLOCKS-WORK-9849500](http://www.villagevoice.com/music/amir-obe-back-with-none-of-the-clocks-work-9849500)



**There’s a consensus in hip-hop that you only get one chance before that ephemeral thing called buzz dissipates.** But then there’s Amir Obè, who proves there are, in fact, second chances.

It’s a rainy Tuesday at the World of McIntosh on Lafayette Street. The invite-only townhouse — funded by the luxury audio brand — features five sprawling floors that include an indoor pool, gourmet kitchen, and outdoor terrace. Tonight, Def Jam Records executives and staff have gathered media and scenesters to celebrate *None of the Clocks Work*, Obè’s first EP since signing to the label in December 2016. “I really want to thank Def Jam for supporting the vision

and really seeing things that might have seemed far-fetched,” Obè says, introducing his new work.

For the 27-year-old rapper-singer (born Amir Obeid), the pomp and circumstance of the evening must feel like a *déjà vu* of sorts. Back in 2009, Obè was in New York City, deciding between the Fashion Institute of Technology or Parsons School of Design for college, when Atlantic Records signed him based on the MySpace presence he’d created under the moniker Phreshy Duzit. “I got a deal pretty quickly, so that switched my route [away from college],” he explains on the phone a few days after the Def Jam event. But things never really panned out with the label, and Obè retreated to the indie scene for years.

It wasn’t until 2014 that he got his next break, when he dropped his stage name and released the mixtape *Detrooklyn*. Named for both his native Detroit and his new home of Brooklyn, the tape featured several nods to the five boroughs, such as “Jay Z, Kanye, Esco” and “Drugs & Cam’ron.” It also nabbed the attention of Drake’s manager, Oliver El-Khatib, who linked Obè with the superstar.

Drake’s co-sign came at an opportune time, just when Obè was considering ending what was, at that point, a fledgling career. “We were trying to get over a hump,” he says of himself and *Detrooklyn* producer NYLZ. “We were a little frustrated, just how we weren’t being received. It could’ve been my last project. . . . It was big for my confidence that Drake reached out at that time, like, ‘I love your project.’ ” Eventually, connecting with Drake brought Obè a higher profile: He coproduced the track “Star67” from Drake’s 2015 release, *If You’re Reading This It’s Too Late*, and opened for the rapper’s protégé PartyNextDoor on the road.

Two years later, Obè’s finally emerging as his own artist. “It’s all been a growth process,” he says, “as far as, like, learning new things melodically and sonically [and] being in a way more mature state.” Despite his now-sizable Rolodex, Obè decided to rely solely upon original collaborator NYLZ to write, record, and produce his new EP. “We knew exactly what we wanted to create when we went to the studio,” he says.

The seven-song project oozes with dark synths and drowned-out vibes. “Wonder why you ain’t called yet/Borderline alcoholic/I’m trippin’ but I ain’t fall yet,” he moans on the opener “Free”; later on the track, he puffs out his chest: “Privacy, I just need privacy/None of you bitches acknowledge me/I’m still waitin’ on apologies.” “Naturally” is an airy passive-aggressive breakup song: “Tryna find some songs to relate to/Tryna find excuses to hate you/Ain’t no makeup out here gonna make you/And ain’t no breakup with me gonna break you.”

A palpable melancholy courses throughout the EP, but Obè won't cop to any one thing—or person—having inspired it. Instead, he wants listeners to go on their own emo trips. “I don't like telling [people] what the songs are about,” he says. “People have their own relationships and the songs can hit so close to home for them. I want them to apply to [them] their own lifestyles and create their own narrative based on what they feel.”