



Sasha McLeod wears a Chanel jacket, \$9,140, leggings, \$4,830, and necklace, \$3,270, available from the Chanel boutiques. Alias Mae boots, \$290. Her own earring, worn throughout. All prices approximate; details at Vogue.com.au/WTB.



SWEET BUT SYCCO

She was the top-ranking first-time artist in this year's Triple J's Hottest 100 countdown. But for indie-pop sensation Sycco, the best is yet to come. By Amy Campbell. Styled by Harriet Crawford. Photographed by Duncan Killick

Sportmax dress, P.O.A. Prada shoes, \$1,400.

Our teens and early 20s are peppered with milestones, and for many, there's one moment that's particularly memorable: moving into our first share house. It's a sensation that Sasha McLeod, the 19-year-old Brisbane-based musician known as Sycco (pronounced 'psycho'), is currently in the throes of experiencing. She waved her parents goodbye a few weeks back, shifting to the greener pastures of a house with no curfews and bare walls begging to be plastered with posters.

"I'm so excited. I've got vibe lights everywhere and it's just so big and I love it," says McLeod as she gestures to the bedroom behind her via Zoom. "I'm really excited to properly decorate it."

The big move isn't the only monumental event that's recently taken place in McLeod's life. The last couple of years have seen the indie-pop artist tick off one bucket list item after the next, though not in a calculated way. After her bright, shimmering sound and charismatic lyrics caught the attention of and garnered praise from radio station Triple J in late 2019, her bouncy 2020 track *Nicotine* – which puts words to the highly relatable feeling of being obsessed with a crush – was added to pop playlists on Spotify and Apple Music. It made the cover of Spotify's New Music Friday playlist, while Apple Music named Sycco New Artist of the Week.

McLeod played Brisbane's Laneway Festival in January 2020, right before the pandemic, which sparked a very productive lockdown for the artist. She was announced the recipient of Triple J Unearthed's Level Up grant in July last year, right before dropping the wildly catchy single *Dribble*. If *Nicotine* documented the euphoria of young love, in the synthy break-up bop that is *Dribble*, those rose-coloured



glasses come off. It surpassed two million Spotify streams in January this year and was voted number 29 in Triple J's Hottest 100, making Sycco the highest-ranking first-time entrant in the entire 2020 poll.

McLeod has just returned from her first national tour, which was sold out, when she books her first *Vogue* photoshoot. She reveals it was only a few years ago that she saved up all her money to buy a MacBook so she could teach herself how to produce her own music.

"It was so unreal, because I thought I couldn't even sell out one of the Brisbane shows. And then we sold out all four, and I was like: 'Who's listening to Sycco in Brisbane, let alone Sydney and Melbourne?'" grins McLeod. "It was so fun because I haven't even played in Melbourne before, and people were singing all of the lyrics."

Aside from Sycco's music being infectious and relatable, McLeod herself is impossible not to like in person. In the same way pop stars like Benet and Billie Eilish come across as authentic on social media (Instagram and TikTok, especially), McLeod appears cute, fun and a little wacky. She's a regular teenage girl being silly with friends, which, to her teenage fans, is arguably just as appealing as the music.

After wondering where all her Spotify and Apple Music streams were coming from, McLeod had a chance to meet some of her fans while on tour. "We did lots of photoshoots in bathrooms. People would ask for photos and I was like: 'Okay, but should we do it here?' And they were like, 'Yeah!' It was pretty cute." Though the artist is hesitant to even use the term fans to describe her followers. "Fans are like ... Billie Eilish has fans. Artists with fan pages have fans. I just have people who come to the shows and listen to the music." But surely being stopped and asked for your photo by a group of complete strangers inside a crowded bathroom is indicative of having fans? "Hmmm, maybe you're right," she ponders.

Every so often you catch glimpses of the self-assured vision that has helped to transform Sycco from a dream born in McLeod's childhood bedroom to one of Australia's most promising pop acts. The name 'Sycco', for instance, comes from McLeod's love of Pink Floyd and its psychedelic music. "That was the inspiration behind the project, because I just love the colour and the texture, and I wanted every Sycco song to be really full of texture and ... stuff," explains McLeod.

When recalling one of her first festival performances, where she coincidentally met her now-manager, McLeod mentions she always imagined she'd manage herself. "I didn't think anyone could like my music as much as I did," she explains earnestly. "So I was like: 'I will never find a manager who can push the project as much as I will.'"

Despite this, McLeod has found herself surrounded by all the right people, including her band who play every Sycco show. Her impeccable taste and creative vision (even though she insists she's "got no idea where Sycco is going"), informs the entire Sycco universe, from the music videos to her zany beauty looks and on-stage outfits, which almost always consist of printed pants and a graphic T-shirt or fun top.

For this *Vogue* shoot though, she took the opportunity to try something new. "I love all the styles the stylist picked out, they were sick. Especially the fuzzy purple and yellow Sportmax dress," says the musician. Did it inspire her to maybe try out a dress or two on stage? "Maybe," she grins.

With her debut EP – endearingly titled *Sycco's First EP* – having just dropped – and a national headline tour scheduled for September, one day soon we might remember this moment as the time before Sycco became a really big deal. Because that's precisely where she's headed. *Sycco's debut EP is out now on Future Classic.*



Opposite page: Fendi jacket, \$3,350, and knit, \$1,550. Paris Georgia pants, \$650. Holiday the Label hat, \$50. William Édouard earrings, \$90, and \$160. Ksubi rings, \$220, right, and, \$220, left. Prada shoes, \$1,400. **This page:** Hermès jacket, \$10,450, bandeau top, \$1,625, pants, \$2,055, and shoes, \$1,535. Pared Eyewear sunglasses, \$260. William Édouard earrings, \$90, and \$160.

DUNCAN KILICK

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Giorgio Armani jacket, \$9,500, dress and pants, both P.O.A. William Édouard earrings, \$90, and \$160. On right hand: Bottega Veneta bracelet, top, P.O.A. Ksubi bracelet, \$260, and ring, \$220. On left hand: Ksubi ring, \$220. Prada shoes, \$1,400.



P.A.M. sweater, \$295. Celine dress, P.O.A. Ksubi jeans, \$240. William Édouard earrings, \$90, and \$160. Prada shoes, \$1,400. Hair: Rumbie Mutsiwa Make-up: Filomena Natoli

DUNCAN KILICK