

WASHED OUT IS IN

Chillwave goes mainstream

Early last year, sarcastic culture blog Hipster Runoff (HipsterRunoff.com) began characterizing a subset of gauzy, understated electronic music as “chillwave.”

The term was meant to be a joke—playing off the “relax, dude” vibes of the music—but the name stuck. Soon “chillwave” was populating reviews everywhere, particularly in Pitchfork. Mark this week, however, as the one when chillwave went mainstream. Washed Out, the dreamy synthesizer alter ego of Ernest Greene and the genre’s flagship band, debuts at No. 26 on the Billboard 200 with his first full-length album, *Within and Without*.

So how did an album of obscure lyrics and wispy song structures emerge so strongly? Sub Pop A&R executive Stuart Meyer, who signed Greene to the Seattle label, thinks this album has stronger pop hooks than his previous EPs. He also cites Washed Out’s already-rabid fan base.

But the act also benefited from widespread national exposure. Last year, the track “Feel It All Around” was chosen as the theme for cable channel IFC’s “Portlandia.” NPR lent a hand by posting a prerelease stream on its website and a “Morning Edition” interview with Greene.

“The NPR stream got retweeted a ton. I think way more people heard that than die-hards heard the album leak. NPR legitimizes him a bit; takes him out of the sole chillwave genre,” Meyer says.

Meyer predicts that a fall tour with Cut Copy will keep the momentum going for Washed Out, which is all part of Greene’s master plan. “When he decided to sign with us,” Meyer says, “he was like, ‘I want to go big.’ And we can do that for folks. I think he’s really happy so far.”

—Julianne Escobedo Shepherd



Publicity boost:
WASHED OUT