

Less than two years ago, **Dressed Like Boys** was a name one had to look up. How quickly things change... After a rollercoaster year in which Belgian singer-songwriter Jelle Denturck's project won over pretty much everyone's hearts and electrified stages all over Europe, the countdown to DLB's sophomore album has begun. **And Then I Woke Up** lands in spring 2027.

Since the release of the eponymous debut album in August 2025, things moved fast for Dressed Like Boys. Very fast. Songs like *Lies*, *Pinnacles*, *Jaouad* and *Stonewall Riots Forever* were embraced by public and press alike. Six Belgian MIA Award nominations followed, resulting in two wins. And DLB embarked on a European tour and triumphant summer, including standout shows at Rock Werchter, Best Kept Secret and two sold-out nights at the OLT Rivierenhof summer venue in Antwerp.

After an intense year like this, one would normally take a breather. Not Denturck. The muses were generous, and over the past two years he worked on songs that would become the new album, a second chapter in a story that began with the debut. Identity is still a central element, this time as a starting point for something more universal: the feeling of being beleaguered, misunderstood, or cast out. "Queer people unfortunately still have to fight for their place in society. Our identity and sexuality, among other things, shape how we present ourselves to the world. But underneath it all runs a current of deeply human emotion that's universal. That's what connects us all."

Another universal undercurrent is freedom, or the lack of it. Running through the album like a red thread is a quote from French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau — *L'homme est né libre, et partout il est dans les fers* ("Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains") — quoted directly in a handful of songs as well. "We all long for freedom, and yet we keep managing to chain ourselves to beliefs, delusions and ego."

Spiritual (self-)liberation, that's ultimately what *And Then I Woke Up* is about, inspired by the Buddhism and Taoism Denturck immersed himself in while writing. "Buddha literally means 'I am awake.' Spiritual awakening and sometimes drifting back to sleep, that's the overarching theme. The title track is the most tangible expression of it. It tells the story of a wandering ego, a grown child full of wishes and ambitions and worries and petty grievances. And then I woke up."