



# Yazeed Ahmad

Meet the Saudi restyling Tokyo streetwear.

يزيد أحمد

P: YURI HORIE, CHO ONGO, YAZEED AHMAD





Yazeed Ahmad has a variety of reasons why he chose not to continue his studies, but perhaps the best explanation was that he simply didn't like it. "It felt like it was an obstacle sometimes," he explains. "I've never regretted the decision." ¶ Originally from Najran, a fertile valley on Saudi Arabia's southern border with Yemen, Ahmad moved to Tokyo when he turned 18. The plan was to study Computer Science, but, while coming of age, he found himself pulled under the spell of an entirely different world: fashion. After school, he would spend countless hours exploring vintage shops in Shimokitazawa, a low-key neighborhood in western Tokyo, at first out of necessity ("I was trying to save some money") before the practice led him to re-evaluate—and ultimately find—his personal style. ¶ After a stint in modeling, he decided to draw on his connections and start a streetwear brand, Unas Tokyo, with two other Saudi friends based in Japan. Featuring rayon bowling shirts, ring-collar T-shirts, and striped tube socks, the brand channels the sort of vintage take on ametora—the Japanese assimilation of classic American style—that fills the pages of *Popeye*, Japan's nearly unclassifiable "magazine for city boys." ¶ What sets Unas Tokyo apart, however, is Ahmed's infusion of his Saudi Arabian heritage into his designs: the drawings of illustrator Dhay Alrashed, the inclusion of Arabic script, and the dedication of the latest collection to Saudi Arabia's "middle class kids."

**BB** — *What's the thinking behind Unas Tokyo?* **YA** — I always say it's self-expression. It's an expression of my story, and my background. **BB** — *Where are you from?* **YA** — I'm from Saudi Arabia. I was born in an area called Najran, close to the desert and the mountains between Yemen and Saudi Arabia. I lived all my life between those two small cities, Najran and Aseer. Once I graduated from high school in 2014—I was 18 years old—I decided to travel to Japan to study. It was a simple idea then. I just wanted to move out of that small city and maybe discover the world. **BB** — *Does your Saudi background manifest in the brand?* **YA** — When I make my designs, I don't think "Is it Japanese? Is it Saudi?" It's just self-expression. I'm influenced by my Saudi roots, of course. →







01

**I never had homesick feelings - ever.  
Tokyo is my home.**

يزيد أحمد

I'm Saudi. I speak Arabic. I was born here. But I have a problem with the industry here. If they say they're a street wear brand, they will just import hoodies from China and add prints on them. In Japan, however, it's not the same because people understand the effort, identity, and the types of fabric you choose. They are sensitive, they feel the details. I was influenced by the mentality of artists in Japan in general. **BB** — *How did you get into fashion?* **YA** — I was trying to save some money when I moved there. I discovered that there was a community facing the same problem: We were young, we liked to do things, but we needed to save money. I tried to buy all my clothes secondhand at the vintage stores in Harajuku and Shimokitazawa. **BB** — *Stores like Chigaco?* **YA** — Yes! Chicago, man. It's my favorite. When I entered that world, I was scouted to do runways and modeling in Japan. I worked with magazines. And then my experience with designers, models, stylists, and so on, made me think: Why not start my own clothing line? I called it Unas Tokyo. I started back in 2018, and the first collection was launched in 2019. **BB** — *Can you tell me about some of your collections?*

**YA** — I made a complete collection called "Middle Class Kids" about the difficulties I faced in life, especially financially, and regarding connections and power, and so on. I was also influenced by Akira Kurosawa, the Japanese filmmaker. I had entered a film into a short film competition and won. In the next collection, I drew sketches of Akira Kurosawa and printed them. **BB** — *Do you wear the clothes you make?* **YA** — Of course! When I started Unas, I only wanted to design clothes that I would wear. With the design of every piece, I capture a scenario: Where I would wear this? With whom? And what would I be doing? **BB** — *Is it street fashion?* **YA** — Yeah, I think I'm still inspired by the vintage stores. I was influenced by skateboarding and hip hop. I mix them inside my head and just make them. I don't have clear references. I just do what I think is suitable for my designs. **BB** — *In what other ways has Japan inspired you?*



\* **Latest Collections**

The founders tell their stories through designs and visuals of the label from those seen on pieces to lookbooks. To view their latest collections, scan the above QR Code.

[ Scan code above ]

02



02 — 03  
Shirts from Unas Tokyo's debut collection (left) and Middle Class Kids collection (above).



03

**YA** — Japan keeps you inspired all the time. Even the billboards, they are so deep. They are filled with colors, identity and font types. There's creativity and innovation everywhere in the city. That's why I like it. Japan forces you to walk to reach the places you want to go. And that's very important because you're then connected directly with life. I think Japan molded my personality to a great extent, in addition to my personal background, which I still hold dear inside, my manners and so on. I'm thankful for that. **BB** — *What was your experience of the Middle Eastern community in Tokyo?* **YA** — I have few friends from the Middle East, but there wasn't a huge community in Tokyo. I can't say that I had that experience. **BB** — *What did you do if you got homesick?* **YA** — I never had →





04

04 — 05  
Looks from Unas Tokyo's  
upcoming collection.



05



Japan keeps you inspired all the time.

يزيد أحمد







06  
Shirt from Unas Tokyo's  
Middle Class Kids collection.



06

I realized home is a feeling, wherever you feel the best version of yourself.

يزيد أحمد

homesick feelings-ever. Tokyo is my home. Since I've moved here, I've found myself and explored my creativity. I realized home is a feeling, wherever you feel the best version of yourself. **BB** — *What's been the reaction to Unas Tokyo back in the Middle East?* **YA** — I was disappointed. The understanding of the meaning of fashion is different for people; I don't feel the industry here is supportive. I'm focusing on continuing my thing in Japan because, so far, I'm grateful to God, we've been reached by big names like WWD and Parco. **BB** — *How do you produce your collections?* **YA** — We learned attention to detail in Japan. We produce everything in Japan because we care about quality before anything else. **BB** — *What's the future of Unas Tokyo in your perspective?* **YA** — I don't know what the future might hold, but I won't stop because I love what I'm doing. I don't regard my designs as business. I need money to live and so on, but my interest is just to produce ideas. But we have a problem: we're freelancers. So, unfortunately, we don't have the budget to do whatever we want. Fortunately, we've completed our first two wholesale operations, which will help the brand a lot in producing other collections. **BB** — *What's it like being a freelancer in Japan?* **YA** — It's very challenging to be freelance in Japan because of the high competition. At the same time, the difficulty of the industry has improved me a lot: You always need to keep up with their standards to make it, and quality, originality and creativity are appreciated the most. **BB** — *Do you think you'll ever live in Japan again?* **YA** — That's my plan. I have to move back to Japan because it makes me just want to create. I did two photo exhibitions. I did my first short film. I did my first ever clothing designs. The environment in Japan inspired me to do all these things. That's why I need to live there-to produce more. ●



READ BROWNBOK IN ARABIC  
You can find a version of this article—and every other story featured in the issue—translated into Arabic by flipping to page 11'