



## Sèrie 3

### Listening Comprehension

#### MAKING MUSIC AFTER BRAIN SURGERY

**Interviewer:** This is Fresh Air. I'm Tom Mosley. This past summer electronic music producer and DJ Jennifer Lee, better known as Tokimonsta, released one of her latest collaborations. Tokimonsta came into her own story through a near-death experience. In 2016, she was diagnosed with a rare brain disease that required two surgeries, leaving her temporarily unable to understand sound or speak. This was devastating for Tokimonsta, who had, before this diagnosis, become a well-known and respected artist in the electronic music world, having released six albums and numerous collaborations.

But she made up for lost time. Just two months after her recovery from brain surgery, Tokimonsta pushed herself to make music again, creating one of her most personal albums, "Lune Rouge," which **garnered** a 2019 Grammy nomination for best dance electronic album, making Tokimonsta the first female Asian American producer to receive a nomination in this category. Tokimonsta creates music with electronic tools as well as a piano, field recordings and vocals. And in live performances, it's like watching a DJ on steroids with Tokimonsta creating sounds and melodies with synthesizers, sequencers and drum machines. Tokimonsta, welcome to Fresh Air.

**Tokimonsta:** Hi. Thanks for having me.

**Interviewer:** You have to tell us the origins, Jennifer, of the name Tokimonsta.

**Tokimonsta:** OK. So the origin - in short, it was a chat screen name. We all had one back in the day. So tokki means rabbit in Korean. And monsta was a way - I guess I thought it was a cool way to write monster when I was 16. But I can't take it back 'cause this has been my name now for many years.

**Interviewer:** Would you change it if you could?

**Tokimonsta:** I mean, there are moments where I feel like when people see my name, it doesn't fit the kind of music I make. You know, in the very beginning, maybe when you see Tokimonsta, you assume that I make really aggressive music. And I think I've been around long enough, and people know that, oh, Tokimonsta makes, like, cool, chill, fun stuff that I've redefined what it means to be Tokimonsta. And in many ways, that name represents me because of the juxtaposition of tokki, which is cute, and then monsta, which is this scary being. And that shows very much in the music that I make. There are moments where my music is very quiet, and then I have moments where my music is loud or beautiful and disturbing or light or heavy. And now, more than ever, I do feel like I identify with my name, and I'm proud to have it be a part of my life.



**Interviewer:** You know, Jennifer, one of the things about electronic music that's fascinating to me is you need to be a musician who understands music in the traditional sense, but you also need to understand technology. What was your first exposure to that part of it, so the actual components of making music with electronic devices?

**Tokimonsta:** My first dive into being creative with music would probably be the piano. I think when I downloaded software in high school, that was the first attempt at trying to make electronic music. I downloaded a program. I opened it. It looked so intimidating that I just uninstalled it 'cause at that time, computers didn't have a lot of space, so it had to go. And I **put that on ice** for a bit 'cause I felt that urge and that want in me to create, and that was going to be the easiest way to create something very complete through my computer. But I put it to rest. And then fast-forward to my first year in college, I downloaded some different production software. A friend of mine showed me very, very basic - like, a very basic way to use it, and I became obsessed. You know, I went on, I was watching YouTube tutorials, I was going on the website, reading their tutorials, which made me think, whoever reads the actual manual from any kind of software, you know?

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Tokimonsta:** But it just became something that became my whole world, my whole focus. It was the hobby of all hobbies. I finally figured out a way to express all these ideas that I had **swirling** inside me.

**Interviewer:** Can you describe, for those who aren't familiar with electronic music, the tools that you love the most to create your sound?

**Tokimonsta:** So for me, as an electronic artist, I mostly work within my computer. I like the efficiency of working on a computer, but it's really important for me to also work with synthesizers. I also use a piano heavily in my music, I think, to touch back on my own roots in classical music.

**Interviewer:** A big part of your sound is also the integration of other sounds in addition to those melodies. You actually carry a recorder with you, and the sounds that you record when you're out in the world - just about everything - car doors slamming, the sounds of birds chirping, wind blowing - and you integrate that in your music.

**Tokimonsta:** Yes. I feel like there's something about field recordings, which is what we call this, that gives your music a specific sonic signature that no one else will have. Because if I record the waves crashing or an airplane flying overhead, that particular moment will only happen once in time. You'll never be able to recreate that same wave or that same airplane or that same car door shutting. And in that way, that song that I use it on will also remain completely unique.

**Interviewer:** And delving a little bit deeper into how your experience with brain surgeries impacted you, how has recovering affected your music afterwards?



**Tokimonsta:** I would say from a technical or scientific or medical standpoint, nothing really changed. I listen to music to the same degree as before. I feel like a lot of people want to think I became superhuman. Like, I have incredible hearing now...but not really. The bridge between your thinking mind and the music was broken down during my surgery. And now I'm able to access that part of my brain that was held away during that recovery process. So in that way, nothing has changed very much. I'm just glad I can hear and appreciate music to the same degree. But I guess philosophically, everything has changed because now I know how precious music is. It's like being starved and having your first bite to eat. Every song has a level of excitement to me that is precious and more precious because I know that it can be taken away.

**Interviewer:** Jennifer Lee, thank you so much for this conversation.

**Tokimonsta:** Absolutely. Thanks for having me.

Adapted from:

“Brain Surgery left Tokimonsta unable to understand music. Now every song is precious”, NPR, October 2, 2023

## Listening Comprehension

### Clau de respostes

1. had a turning point in her career.
2. Briefly after she got over her operation.
3. It was a chat name she picked when she was 16.
4. No, because it represents the music that she makes.
5. She learned it through a friend who taught her the basics of a software and video tutorials.
6. She mainly uses her computer.
7. Because the sounds give her music a unique character.
8. She values music to a greater extent.

## Reading Comprehension

### Clau de respostes

1. is a US government-led project to reduce cancer death rates.
2. can help improve cancer treatments.
3. reaching all kinds of patients and empowering them to make decisions.
4. not everyone has had access to proper diagnosis to the same extent.
5. AI cannot be trained with large patient datasets.
6. Because they can predict how tumors might develop.
7. By ensuring patients receive more information.
8. make patients commit to treatment.