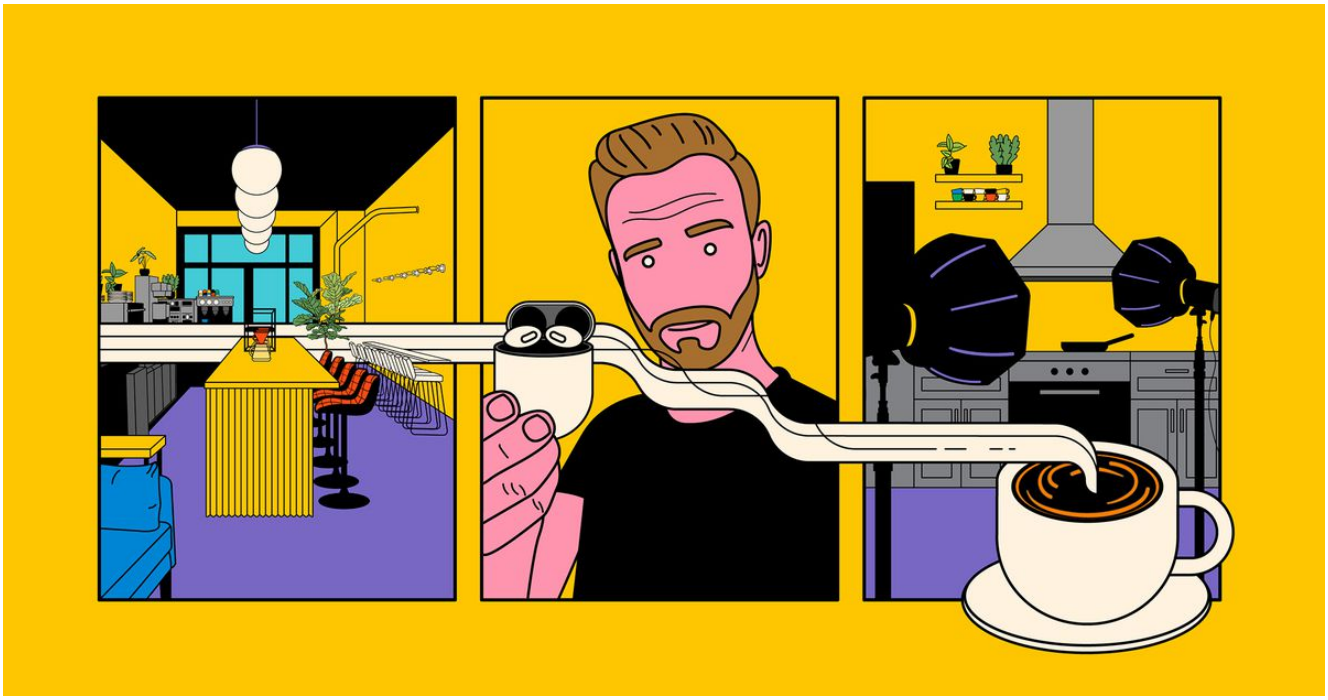
The tech YouTuber who opened a coffee shop



For the last eight months, David Cogen has been living a double life. By day: a YouTuber and creator, the face of TheUnlockr, reviewing phones and testing ebikes and explaining how food smokers really work. By night and morning and every single other available moment in between: a coffee shop entrepreneur, working to get a Brooklyn spot called Coffee Check up and running. The whole thing started late last year and escalated quickly. He needed a new workspace after his previous lease ended, had a business idea for it that didn't quite pan out, decided to repurpose his new space into a coffee roastery, and then realized there was a front door to the street. Why not open a cafe, too?

Coffee Check has been open since late August, and on the morning I visit, it's impressively busy for a brand-new place hidden down an otherwise residential street in Greenpoint. The space is airy and open, with a long counter and bar on the right side and a big communal wooden table on the left. A customer sits in a comfy chair in the corner, taking a work

call at a surprisingly high volume. There are outlets everywhere, the Wi-Fi is blisteringly fast, and the smart lighting setup is rigged to both look nice and keep the indoor plants alive. It’s your local coffee shop, designed by a huge tech geek.

Cogen himself walks in at about 10:30AM, checks in with the baristas, and then offers me a tour of the place. He walks me through the coffee shop, then through a locked glass door into the back half of Coffee Check’s space, which is a fully functional production studio that other creators and companies can rent on Peerspace. (If you’re counting, that’s now three businesses he’s running: YouTube, coffee, and landlord.) He’s particularly excited about the kitchen, which isn’t something you can usually find in a rentable studio — and he’s set it up so it’s easy to remove and add appliances, in the hopes of doing some kitchen gadget reviews on YouTube. A bunch of e-bikes, from another video, sit over in the corner, next to a monstrous Samsung TV that is for a forthcoming video.

Eventually, Cogen leads me into the podcast studio, a huge booth with a couch and two chairs that he says he got from Finland — and got at a discount by offering to let the booth double as the company’s New York showroom. (That’s four businesses.) Cogen sits on a chair, points me to the couch, fires up the Logitech microphones, and starts telling me his story.

On this episode of *The Vergecast*, the second in the two-part miniseries that we’re calling “How to Make It in the Future,” Cogen tells the story of how a YouTuber becomes a coffee shop owner. We go all the way back to how the phrase “coffee, check” became part of his brand in the first place, then dig into how he turned a love for coffee into a deep knowledge of it and what it took to get Coffee Check up and running.

Cogen has spent a lot of time thinking about the mix of content and coffee in his life going forward. After 13 years

of living the always-on creator life, there’s something romantic and slower about running a local business. But he’s also spent years filming his coffee for his videos; does he aspire to be a coffee YouTuber, too? And can you make content about your business without becoming a content business and changing the whole purpose of the thing you’ve created? Cogen is wrestling with the same things every creator deals with — and he’s put his money and time into trying to make it better.

If you want to know more about everything we discuss in this episode, here are some links to get you started:

https://www.theverge.com/2024/10/20/24273515/coffee-check-david-cogen-unlockr-vergecast