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YUNA KEKE PALMER HIGHLY SUSPECT
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printed in Sweden / LADYGUNN MAGAZINE / 2016 / Issue 14 / Published by LADYGUNN MEDIA

POWER TO THE PEEPS

Just tell yourself, "YOU GOT THIS! KEEP GOING! EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE OK! DON'T GIVE UP." Now take a deep breath, really fill your lungs up with air until it almost hurts, then let it out nice and slow. Sometimes that's the only thing you can do to feel sane in this crazy world.

Our Power Trippin' issue is arriving during a pinnacle point in my life and quite frankly the world. At 34 years old, these are the craziest times I have ever seen. Between the US election, Aleppo, terrorism, the Keystone pipeline, global warming... do I have to go on? Democracy in the free world is being challenged by a glorified reality show star. Weather patterns are getting more extreme by the month, and our global economy is at the hands of multinational conglomerates who view lives as increased shareholder value. Cities and lives are left ruined by power hungry politicians and dictators leaving hundreds of thousands displaced or dead. This is happening both in war-torn countries and in our prison systems in the United States. The parallels have been hard to ignore.

Yes, a lot has been on my mind, including my own internal struggles. Sometimes I feel like I have almost hit a wall. I've been asking myself a lot questions recently. What do I really want to do with the rest of my life? Who am I? What will I be doing when I'm 60? How can I help humanity? Are all of my dreams going to come true, or am I just going to end up a big fat failure? These concepts came up a lot in my conversations with artists, creatives and editors in creating this issue, and the most reassuring thing about this existential crisis is that I learned that I am not alone. No one seemed to have the answers, not my parents, my in-laws, superstars, uber successful friends flexing on Facebook, nor the struggling artists. No one seemed to have the answers.

I finally realized that this very idea of questioning my past, present and future is one of the core elements of being human. All of our questions are different, though some are on positions that deny humanity to some based on race, gender, sexuality, income, etc. You can never stop a human mind from questioning. All of my greatest heroes are those who use their voice to drive the most important questions to society. Thinking of my own radical freedom is a blessing but also a curse at times. When I think of all the other humans going through the same doubts and spirals of life no matter what our circumstances, I feel hope for earth and humanity. Sartre is adjusting his glasses and grinning down at me saying 'yes, child go on...' in his grave.

This issue is filled with some of those beautiful humans that took ownership of their lives and their situations. It was a personal honor to interview Laverne Cox, a brilliant actress I have admired for a long time who is now using her voice to make LGBT rights and anti-violence a national issue. We are happy to tell her story and so many others. We hope this issue is as powerful to you as we felt while making it. Go out there and claim what's yours. Get your power on, boo!

See you soon!



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WXYZ

Jewelry designer Laura Wass walked up to her boss in 2011 and told him she wanted to move from technical to creative design. His response ended up fulfilling much more than her initial request. “Why don’t we launch your brand?” she remembers him asking, sparking the birth of New York City-based jewelry line, WXYZ.

This was not a hand-out. Wass had worked toward this dream for a long time, laying down the groundwork, brick by brick, to make it achievable. From when she first learned how to solder at age thirteen, to training in industrial-scale manufacturing at Metal Dynamics, WXYZ was built on knowledge, structure and an innate drive for success, as much as it was built on creativity and passion. From a meticulous and thoughtful mind sprung textural and geometric jewelry and accessories impossible to ignore.

Fast-forward to today: WXYZ pieces have been donned by queens including Beyonce, Nicki Minaj and Erykah Badu. Regardless of whether or not you are a fan of math, Wass has devised a way to draw you in by “building structures through repeated elements.” Wass elaborates, “Aesthetically, I wanted to create an alternative to the prominent aesthetic of the DIY and organic vibe that dominates jewelry design. I was designing strong shapes, based on mathematical structures ranging from biology to architecture.” Pairing metal with unconventional materials, such as rubber balls manufactured in a sex factory, each line has its own distinct pattern.

Debuting this season, The Neon Collection wields the motif of sacred geometrical patterns. “Bright and sweet like candy, but also so badass,” Wass describes. “The collection was designed with nightlife in mind, and it glows under a blacklight... I like to think of these pieces as externalizing one’s inner light.” Wass hopes to empower those who wear WXYZ to stand out from the crowd.

WXYZ retails internationally and can be found online at ***wxyzjewelry.com.***



story / Tiffany Diane Tso
photos / Blessing Marie
model / Bree Smith
jewelry designer / Laura Wass
styling / Tiffani Williams
hair / Marcel Dagenais Using Oribe Hair Care
makeup / Stephanie Peterson @ Art Department using Make Up Forever
manicurist / Mei Kawajiri @ Nails by Mei



story / Tiffany Diane Tso
photos / Ryan Slack
makeup / Mark de los Reyes
hair / Clara Leonard
stylist / Hannah Kristina Metz
models / Gabrielle Richardson + Rachel Myhill
photo assistant / Kelly Mayhugh

Hannah Kristina Metz is a different breed of designer: the storyteller. Based in New York City, her ethically-made eponymous womenswear line, HKM, draws inspiration from literature, art and film. Unsurprisingly, each HKM collection tells a story.

Still in its infancy, the brand launched June 2015. Her debut collection was a tribute to her favorite star-crossed lovers, Tristan and Iseult—specifically Joseph Bédier’s interpretation, for its extra tragic nature.

“I used a repeating eye motif to represent their being under constant surveillance and the tears because, well, the whole story is full of weeping,” Metz explains.

The designer based her sophomore line on Emily Brontë’s Wuthering Heights, resulting in romantic garments with literary allusions to heartbreak, longing and ghostly apparitions. Less embellished than the previous collection, she “found a few lines from the book that [she] thought would be playful script on clothing.”

“‘Damn Thee, Kiss Me’ is said in a rather pathetic interaction between Heathcliff and Hareton, and ‘Haunt Me’ is from one of the more famous speeches in the story, in which Heathcliff is imploring Cathy’s ghost to haunt him,” she reveals. “The hands are meant to be Cathy’s ghostly embrace of Heathcliff.”

Her forthcoming collection is inspired by A Room with a View by E.M. Forster, this time playing up sheer fabrics, intricate embroidery and smiling flowers.

HKM was birthed after she closed the doors to her formerly co-owned lingerie line and vintage shop, The Loved One. Metz shifted gears, focusing on launching her own line: “Having my own collection had long been a dream of mine since transforming tube socks into what I thought were fetching Barbie outfits.” Thus, HKM is noticeably a labor of love; Metz makes sure the pieces are manufactured ethically with the most minimal eco-footprint, and she openly discloses the source and fabrication of her clothing with each release.

Learn more at HKM.NYC

ONEPIECE, NORMA KAMALI.
WINDBREAKER, VINTAGE/STYLIST'SOWN.
BLUE CRYSTAL NECKLACE, JOOMI LIM.
SILVER BIB NECKLACE, R.J. GRAZIANO.
SHOES, GEDEBE

VOTE FOR YOU, BABY!



PHOTOS / ERIC T. WHITE
MODEL / ASHLEY SMITH
STYLING / SHEA DASPIN
HAIR / PETER MATTELIANO
MAKEUP / GEORGINA BILLINGTON
PROP STYLIST / ALEX BRANNIAN
STORY/ KOKO NTUEN
PRODUCTION / KOKO NTUEN & ERICA RUSSELL

JACKET, DANIEL SILVERSTAIN.
SWIM BOTTOMS, NORMA KAMALI. RINGS AND NECKLACE, JOOMI LIM.
HILLARY SHIRT, STYLIST'S OWN.SHOES, ALEJANDRO INGELMO.
STAR EARRINGS, R.J. GRAZIANO.C

FEATHER JACKET, TOPSHOP.
SHIRT AND SHORTS SET, TOPSHOP.
SHOES, ASKA.NECKLACE AND EARRINGS, R.J. GRAZIANO.

Texas Born and bred, Ashley Smith's adorable trademark gap-toothed grin has helped usher in the Model 2.0—a quirky new breed of supermodel rising through the ranks of the fashion world and fame via Tumblr, Instagram, indie magazines and high-end advertising campaigns.

A bona fide fashion pro, Smith has had all of these mediums wrapped around her finger for years, but aside from her meteoric modeling career, she's also one of the most down-to-earth creative spirits I've ever known.

The first time I met Smith I made the error of introducing her as a "model," and she quickly but politely corrected me: "I'm an artist, girl." I never made that mistake again, and after knowing her for a few years, it's easy to understand why. Every year, her creative soul finds its stride more and more: These days you can find her on the covers of international magazines, making parties sweaty with her euphoric DJ skills, and crafting as much art as she can in a lifetime.

A true rising power in the art and fashion industry, I chatted with Smith about self-empowerment, turning up the volume on her career as a DJ, the importance of voting and more.

You are super creative and have been talking about and making art since I met you years ago. What type of art reflects your most authentic inner artist?
One of my flaws is that I've never really stuck to one avenue of expressing myself. I love being in front of the camera—both acting and modeling. That's a sort of physical art. On the other hand, I like to draw abstract images that help me convert and understand my feelings and views. I also love music and dance, which was my first true love. All in all, I just love breaking down my walls and letting my true self shine through. It's a challenge, but it's very rewarding.

I've been at a few parties you've DJed at and you always have me dancing like crazy. When did you get into DJing? Describe the vibe you like to create with your mix.
I started DJing about eight months ago. I'm not trying to pretend I'm this amazingly technical DJ. I just like music a lot, know a lot about it, and like sharing it with people. It's super fun to be at parties and see people just go wild and let loose and to be like, "I did that!" It's kind of a form of creating anarchy. I play mostly rock n' roll and punk music, so I'm sure you can imagine the parties that I DJ can get pretty insane.

What's your earliest memory of falling in love with music?
My first song I remember falling in love with was "The Sign" by Ace of Base. I'd walk up and down my grandparents' stairs signing it as loud as I could and acting like I was in the music video.



ONEPIECE, NORMA KAMALI.
FUR, ADRIENNE LANDAU. SHOES, IIJIN.
SOCKS, GUMBALL POODLE. HOOP EARRINGS, R.J. GRAZIANO.

Are you voting this election? Are you scared of the current political climate?
I will certainly be voting. To not exercise that right is a shame. I wouldn't say I'm scared, I'm just amazed at the things that come out of some of these politicians' mouths. This race honestly just seems like a "he said, she said" sort of thing. I just wish they would stick to how they expect to be the best for America, rather than focusing on which candidate is the enemy.

What are your favorite memories from growing up in Austin? What does it feel like when you go back?
I really loved adventuring downtown, going vintage shopping, and going to punk shows. I had a really wild early teenage years period! I love going back home; it really grounds me and helps remind me that I'm still just that silly, curious girl that doesn't need a lot of money or attention, just new experiences.

Has modeling and the limelight changed your personality at all? How do you ground yourself?
I can't say that traveling the world and being the spokesperson for big companies hasn't changed me. It has, but I think I've always focused on it being a positive change. It taught me that anything is possible as long as you believe in yourself.

What are some dream projects that you would like work on?
I want to direct and star in my own movie one day. I wouldn't know where to begin, but I honestly think I'll do it one day.

If you could bless the world with three things, what would they be?
A global belief in science, a mandatory charity program, and a shift in the way we consume and reuse products. I suppose all three are saying [that we need to] connect this world so we can all help and learn together.

Name one thing every human could do to make a small step in changing the world.
Join a charity. I'm not talking about just giving money to an organization. I'm talking about actually feeding the homeless and building homes, diving into other people's lives and really helping hands-on.

What are things you lay in bed at night thinking about?
You really don't want to know. [Laughs]

Who are your favorite people to hang out with?
Weirdos!

What makes you feel powerful?
Knowing what I want and taking the action and steps to achieve it.



power on, baby! you've got the power, baby! power to the people!

DRESS, TOPSHOP.
FLAG PIN, R.J. GRAZIANO.
HILLARY PIN, THE FOUND.
SHOES, ALEJANDRO INGELMO

RAE SREMMURD

PHOTOS / DAVID JOSEPH PEREZ
STYLING / OLORI SWANK
GROOMING / NIK STURDIVANT
BRAIDS / ERINN COURTNEY
MODEL / MILAN DIXON
STYLING / EBONY CAMPBELL
MAKEUP / DOMINIQUE LERMA
HAIR / ANDRES COPELAND
STORY/ ALYSSA HARDY
PRODUCTION / KOKO NTUEN



SHIRT, SAINT LAURENT. GLASSES, CARTIER



FUR, SWEATER AND GOGGLES, GUCCI.



COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: SWAE: SWEATER, PAUL SMITH. MILAN/MODEL): DRESS: SANDRO. COAT, JOY RICH. JEWELRY, LUV AJ. GLASSCARTIER. PANTS: HUDSON. MILAN: DRESS: ALL SAINTS. SOCKS: HUF. SHOES: NIKE. JEWELRY: LUV AJ. JXMMI: SHIRT: VIVIENNE WESTWOOD. GOGGLES: GUCCI. MILAN: WHITE SHIRT: TOPSHOP. BRA: TOPSHOP. SKIRT: JENNIFER CHUN. PANTS: ALL SAINTS.

Every once in a while, an earworm comes along and you can't remember the first time you heard it. You may not know who sings it but somehow you know every single word. That's what "No Type," the smash hit by brothers J Khalif "Swae Lee" Brown and Aaquil "Slim Jxmmi" Brown—a.k.a. Rae Sremmurd—was for the millions of people who heard it. Between Snapchat videos of Kylie Jenner lip syncing along, massive radio rotations and over 500 million video views, everyone with access to a radio found themselves bobbing their heads and singing the words to the catchy hip hop hit. "It's still pretty unreal," Swae says of the success, "to know that so many people are watching your creative vision, even possibly multiple times. It's bananas."

Given that Swae and Jxmmi are only 21 and 22 respectively, their seemingly out-of-nowhere success is an anomaly. Not only have their songs amassed millions of fans, the Mississippi natives have already opened for Beyonce, gone platinum, been featured on a Juicy J song, and won a BET award all before the general public knew how to pronounce their name. (It's pronounced "Ray Sh-rem-erd," in case you were wondering.)

In August, the brothers released their sophomore album, *SremmLife2*, a testament to the lifestyle of "chill vibes" and "making music" they claim to live by. Their most recent single, "Black Beatles," features Gucci Mane and is an ode to the changing face of hip hop, one which they are at the forefront of. In the video, they stand on-stage with guitars and microphones, much like a typical rock or pop music concert. It shows that if they follow through, this generation of young hip hop stars has the ability to make waves throughout the music industry, simply by melding genres, breaking molds and living the #sremmlife.

What was it like growing up in Mississippi?

Jxmmi: I feel like Tupelo is where I developed my unique personality and my unique talent.
Swae: It was a chance for me to figure out life and what steps I had to take. I was working 9-to-5 here and there [while I] finished high school. It's like a city where everybody knows everybody.

When it comes to making music, what is your process like?

J: We have a studio on our bus so we're always creating. Sometimes we'll go into the studio, work on a couple songs, fall asleep in there, then wake right back up and get back in the booth like nothing ever happened.

S: Sometimes we lock ourselves in the studio for 10-12 hours at a time for days.

What has the rapid success been like for each of you these past two years?

J: [Our] rapid success has been a roller coaster. I learned a lot from watching other artists and my own personal experiences. My entire life circumstances have changed, it's been great.

S: It's just like been wonderful because it's like all of your hard work is paying off and your whole standard of life changes and you're finally able to live the life you know you should have.

What's been the biggest moment for you so far?

J: Being in the studio with Juicy J was the coolest moment to me. And opening for Beyonce!

S: Writing for Beyonce... Breaking records on Billboard and just going 5x platinum... Like, that's huge.

Your video has been watched 500 million times! What has this level of recognition been like to experience?

J: It's cool to see how many people rock with the movement.

What's the craziest thing a fan has done?

J: A fan tattooed "Sremmlife" on her wrist!

S: Maaan, there was one time in Paris when these fans followed us around all day through the whole city!

What's the best part about being brothers and musical partners? What's the worst?

J: Everything's cool to me, we do brother-type stuff.

S: We're brothers so you know we have our sibling arguments sometimes and working together, you can't always get your space because you're stuck on a bus together a lot of the time. But being able to live out my dream with my brother is pretty awesome... Like, this was what we wanted to do since we were kids, so being able to reflect on everything together is one of the best parts.

Can you tell us something about each other that only you would know?

J: No! We're pretty open books and we've done so many interviews that y'all probably know everything about us at this point.

S: Hmmm, what do I know about Slim Jxm that nobody else does? Honestly, I think the fans may know more about Jxmmi than I do at this point.

If you could collaborate with anyone who would it be?

J: Juicy J was my dream collaboration so I'm up for anything now.

S: Maaan, if Mike was still alive... or if all the Beatles were still alive. That would be epic.

If you weren't musicians, what would you be doing?
J: I'd go back to school for business.

S: I think I'd still be involved in music in some form.. .I'd still be writing for sure.

Where do you see hip hop going as artists your age start to grow into their own?

J: I see hip hop elevating and growing and new age artists becoming more accepted.

S: I see it being free-spirited and fun. All the artists our age, you know we're really just making music that we can vibe to and feel good about. We're just living that #Sremmlife.

THE INTERNET'S OWN GIRL GROUP GRLCVLT

story / Tiffany Diane Tso
photos / Jena Cumbo
styling / Shea Daspin
styling assistant / Caroline Stinger
makeup / Laura Mitchell
hair / Anike Rabiu
featuring / Tara Daniels, Alexz Graves, Ashley Hefnawy
Lane Moore, Tiffany Diane Tso, Remy Holwick

On February 1, 2015, I was inducted into a secret society. Well, to be honest, I wasn't sure what it was when I was added to its private Facebook group. At first, the notifications of strangers posting to the group's feed were no more than additional Internet noise, until one day I decided to read a post or two.

What I found was fascinating.

Here, in this private Facebook group, ladies* warned others about potential sex offenders or Tinder trolls, divulged their deepest struggles, boosted each other's body image through (sometimes nude) selfie chains, discussed current events and their social implications and everything else under the sun. My inner voyeur was instantly stimulated, but even moreso the feminist warrior that lives somewhere within me.

Who were these strangers with whom I felt this odd sense of kinship? Scanning through, as diverse as they are — producers, students, designers, writers, business owners, bread bakers, baristas — each member shares one common denominator: the desire to dismantle the patriarchy. Now with a network spanning over 5,000 members across a few different location-based branches, the group has developed beyond the purpose of providing friendship, selfies and relationship advice. They have become a force for social change.

Most notably, GRLCVLT joined the cause launched by Stanford law professor Michele Dauber in an effort to recall Judge Aaron Persky, the lax Santa Clara County Superior Court judge who sentenced rapist Brock Turner to a lenient six months in county jail. GRLCVLT organized a series of events, blatantly titled FUCK RAPE CULTURE, activating the community and its allies to join the campaign by writing letters, raising funds and raising awareness through extensive press coverage.

I watched this story unfold via the press along with the rest of the nation. At the same time, I read reactions of horror amongst my peers in the group. Some shared their own encounters with rape and sexual assault, feeling deeply and personally affected by this trial. I watched the group spring quickly into action as soon Turner's punishment was doled. I watched Remy Holwick, photographer/model and the GRLCVLT admin responsible for forming the New York branch, send out a bat signal to the group. Then, I watched as members of the community jumped in to contribute in whatever way possible, from donating a venue to promising press coverage from the outlet(s) they contribute to.

The battle against rape culture rages on, and GRLCVLT doesn't seem to be easing up on their efforts. It also is not the only social change the group seeks. From Black Lives Matter to LGBTQ rights, the organization operates on the core beliefs of intersectionality and progressiveness. "GRLCVLT is body positive, career positive, in support of self-identified gender pronouns, and sex positive," reads an official statement.



ALL JACKETS AND CUSTOMIZED "GRL CVLT" PATCHES, RAGING BUSH. ON ALEXZ: TOP, NOON BY NOOR. SKIRT, ZARA. NECKLACE, JOANNA LAURA CONSTANTINE. ON LANE: BLACK DRESS, KELSEY RANDALL. LEGGINGS, NORMA KAMALI. CROP TOP, TOPSHOP. HOOP EARRINGS, R.J.GRAZIANO. BOOTIES, MARSKINRYYPPY. ON TARA: SKIRT, TOPSHOP. VEST & BODYSUIT, TARA'S OWN. SHOES, TBD. NECKLACE, VITA FEDE. ON ASHLEY: BLACK CHOKER, ASHLEY'S OWN. CRYSTAL NECKLACE, JOOMI LIM. CROP TOP, UNDER ARMOUR. PANTS, NORMA KAMALI: SHOES, IIJIN.ON TIFFANY: CRYSTAL NECKLACE, JOOMI LIM. DRESS, SCREAMING MIMI'S. HEELS, ALEXIS GAMBLIN.



FEATURING FROM LEFT // TARA DANIELS: REMY HOLWICK: ALEXZ GRAVES: TIFFANY TEO: ASHLEY HERNAWY: LANE MOORE: ON TARA: DRESS: IUNE: EARRINGS: JOANNA LAURA CONSTANTINE: ON REMY: PERSONALIZED DENIM JACKET: RAGING BUSH: SKIRT: MARYKATRANTZOU: CHOKER, BRACELETS AND NECKLACES: JOOMILIM: RAINBOW CHROME NECKLACE: SWAROVSKI: ON ALEX: BODYSUIT: TADASHI SHOJI: SHOES: ISABEL MARANT ÉTOILÉ: ON TIFFANY: LEATHER JACKET: THE REFORMATION: CRYSTAL NECKLACE: JOOMILIM: DRESS: SCREAMING MIMI'S: HEELS: ALEXIS GAMBLIN: ON ASHLEY: EARRINGS: JOOMILIM: TOP: KAELEN: ON LANE: BLACK DRESS: KELSEY RAN-DALL: LEGGINGS: NORMA KAMALI: CROP TOP: TOPSHOP: HOOP EARRINGS: R.J. GRAZIANO: BOOTIES: MARSKINRY YPPY: ON REMY: SKIRT: KAELEN: SHOES: REMI'S OWN: TOP: MARNA RO: SILVER CHOKER WITH GEMS: JOOMILIM: GOLD CHOKER: VITA FEDE

Originally founded in Los Angeles by Annaliese Nielsen, the secret group is meant to act as a safe space, at least for those who can agree to the group's fundamental purposes. Members offer TW (trigger warnings) when talking about touchier subjects, which might span from break ups to sexual assault. Specialized splinter groups have spun off with even more niche purposes: for women of color, women in business, etc.

"Online communities are not new to me," says Ashley Hefnawy, a 25-year-old freelance copywriter and journalist who joined at the beginning of 2015. "I've been all about them since I was young: MySpace, LiveJournal, even Neopets." The difference between this community and those others, besides its private nature, is the closeness and commonality its members are able to find within it.

Rules against slut-shaming, body-shaming and use of derogatory or racist terms exist in order to protect the space. The fact that a patriarchy exists and that marginalized groups deserve a voice is another general understanding shared by the community. When asked how the group has impacted her, 27-year-old producer Alexz Graves says, "I think understanding what intersectionality means and what it involves has been my biggest growth."

"It's made me a better feminist and a better person," Holwick says of the group. "It's made me more patient and less lonely."

Almost every member of the group would echo similar sentiments. "There are so many good-hearted people in the world who want to make it safer and better for every person on this earth, and I feel so fortunate every time I meet one of them," shares Lane Moore, comedian and writer who fronts the band It Was Romance. "It's like meeting a kindred spirit, but instead of one person, it's 2,000."

No matter where you stand on social issues, it is undeniable that the group is a driving force for positive social change for the marginalized. Equally important, it has provided its members with a support system in which they can truly flourish as individuals.

Admin Tara Daniels, a 29-year-old program coordinator at an arts education nonprofit, was inducted to the group more recently, in January 2016. "For me, it's not only connected me to a lot of new people," Daniels explains, "but reconnected me to parts of myself I neglected over the years. I have been able to be more of a confident me, because I have a space where I can be truthful about me as a whole."

*It is important to note that not all GRLCVLT members identify as female.

RAGING BUSH
Not Your Grandmother's Embroidery
Pussy Power
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POWER POSER

Photos / Martin Rusch
Styling / Alvin Stillwell
Makeup / Michal Cohen
Hair / Kristin Heitkotter
Models / Carla Sophia @ Vision
Janaye Furman @ Vision
Lily McBeath @Nous
Vanessa Mendez @ Vision
Hayley Ashton @ Ford

SWEATER,DANIEL SILVERSTEIN.
SKIRT,H&M STUDIO.



TOP,DVF. TROUSERS, WALTZ. OXFORDS,
CALVIN KLEIN COLLECTION.



CARDIGAN,JUICY COUTURE.
CROP TOP,ALLESSANDRA RICH.
SKIRT,PROENZA SCHOULER.



BRA,HOPELESS.
JACKET, TOPSHOP.
SKIRT , KEEPSAKE.
SHOES ,IIJIN.



DRESS, JOIE.
BEANIE, MARC JACOBS.

PONCHO ,IIJIN.
BOOTS, DOC MARTENS.



DRESS(ON TOP) ,ADRIENNE PAPPELL.
DRESS, IIJIN.
SHOES, TOPSHOP.



TOP ,ZARA. VEST, COOPER STREET.
SKIRT,JON. SHOES, IIJIN.



SWEATER ,PUBLIC SCHOOL.
PANTS,DANIEL SILVERSTEIN. OXFORDS ,KENZO.
NECKLACE/HEADBAND,ASHLEY HELVEY.



CARDIGAN,JUICY COUTURE.
CROP TOP,ALLESSANDRA RICH.
SKIRT,PROENZA SCHOULER.



SWEATER,PHILLIP LIM.
TROUSERS,WRKDEPT.
SHOES,IIJIN.



SWEATER ,TOPSHOP.
SKIRT ,BALENCIAGA.



SWEATER,VINCE.
SKIRT,WRKDEPT.



AMANDA LEPORE

PHOTOS / VIJAT MOHINDRA MAKEUP / ANTHONY NGUYEN HAIR / PETER MATTELIANO STYLING SAMMY K NAILS / STEPH STONE





story / Koko Ntuen

The first thing anyone will tell you about Amanda Lepore is that she is a sweetheart. I met her during my introduction to the New York nightlife scene back in my early twenties, at The Cock, a place where a debaucherous night would always end. Amanda was an NYC icon at that point, sitting there in a sheer shirt revealing her glamorous, perky tits, surrounding by a protective flock of friends as me and my pal broke through to meet her. She was as sweet as an angel, an attitude that would later merge into the wacky world of David LaChapelle. She would become his biggest muse in the '90s.

"I guess he asked around to make sure I was nice," Lepore shares. "He'd like nice people and nice energy around him. People said I was really sweet and everything. So we did a few shoots, this snorting diamonds shoot, and this plastic surgery fashion one, and the one with me breastfeeding a baby doll.

"Then it got really crazy. I became more world-wide, not just a New York thing. He started using me more and more. At one point he didn't wanna use any models but me for advertising. If the advertiser didn't wanna use me, then he would say, 'Okay, then I want a girl with black hair, no boobs, and a piehole for a mouth if I can't have Amanda!'"

They made for a fabulous creative duo whose work would be seen by millions of people; they made art and fashion history. And their underlying love story was speculated by many.

"We sort of had a thing, but you know, he was gay," she tells me, laughing. "So it never really went that way. But he loved boobs. He was one of those guys that loved boobs and loved me being naked and stuff. He gave me more attention than most boyfriends."

Lepore's famous boobs and risque outfits have set the precedent for the sex-threaded pop culture of today a la Kim Kardashian, Lady Gaga and company. Long before it was standard fashion, she was sporting sheer tops, see-through dresses and nipple pasties as accessories. Through the years, she learned to commodify her bombshell aesthetic in a way similar to some of her inspirations. She brings up some of the ladies she adores.

"Marilyn Monroe, I really love her," she gushes. "I like Dita Von Teese a lot. I love her shows, her look and everything. I used to go out naked all the time. When I started doing my songs I would get naked. And one time I got the club into trouble. Around that time I saw Dita with the pasties and I said, 'Oh, I could be naked and get away with it!' They're both so exaggerated and they kind of do what I do. I have bonds with them."

These days, Miss Lepore spends her days modeling and appearing at various events as well as performing her own songs and dancing at burlesque ballroom shows. She currently holds a night at the Standard Hotel called Salon, and she is working on an autobiography and an album as well. But when I ask her is she ever gets bored with nightlife culture, she scoffs at the very suggestion.

"It's really exciting for me no matter what," Lepore says. "Everyone wants to take my picture and meet me and everything, so I'm really occupied when I go out. Where, before, it was like, 'Oh, what am I gonna do? Who am I gonna talk to?' I would be more nervous and self-conscious. But now, it's just, you know, I don't really have to do anything but show up and everyone's happy!"

When I ask her about her empire and how she reflects on all the things she has done and brought into the world, my pitch rises with excitement as I think about her vast creative portfolio. Her answer and tone immediately calms me down.

"I just relax," she says. "I don't know if I ever have those thoughts. I'm a person who likes to keep busy, so I don't really like to look back on things. I like living in the moment. It's like when I go to yoga or something, it's just more like an environment where you're more equal with everyone. I'll just go, 'Wow, I'm lucky.'"





ALL CLOTHING. CUSTOM MADE.



ERIKA JAYNE

STORY / MARIA ELENA PHOTOS / SNAPLORD MAKEUP / PRESTON MENESES HAIR / CASTILLO STYLING / DANI MICHELLE

One of my favorite things in the entire world is seeing someone's child self effortlessly connect with their adult self, which is precisely what happens when multi-faceted glamazon Erika Jayne tells me about the moment she realized she wanted to be a performer.

"I still remember it so clearly! I was wearing a lavender satin jumpsuit with silver sequin straps…" she reminisces, laughing.

Suddenly, the image of an 8-year-old Jayne singing Dolly Parton in a satin jumpsuit fills my mind, and it all becomes so clear to me: This woman knows what she's doing. Decades later, here she is, slaying the world with her dance-pop music all while wearing glittery platforms and bottle-blonde pigtails.

To me, that's a very beautiful thing: Getting the chance to hear about Jayne's childhood memory and realizing it's so much more than just a memory—it was the moment she realized what she wanted to do with her life.

We all get caught up in the day-to-day things sometimes, and although we shouldn't let it distract us from our goals, we often do. Maybe you're dealing with relationship problems, Internet haters, or perhaps you're just annoyed with life's minor inconveniences. Your negative feelings are valid, but sometimes, you just need to look at yourself in the mirror and say, "How many fucks do I give? NONE!" Or at least that's what Erika Jayne would do.

In a world where trolls are more commonplace than actual people, it can be difficult to deal with the haters. But that doesn't phase Jayne one bit. "I'm 45 years old. If I don't have it figured out by now, I'm never going to," she explains. "I know the truth. My family knows the truth. And the truth is really all that matters."

Other than her plethora of Billboard No. 1 dance hits, Jayne is known for being the breakout star of Bravo's *Real Housewives of Beverly Hills*. Her sheer honesty combined with her give-no-fucks attitude added a whole new dynamic to the show, and quite frankly, viewers couldn't get enough of it.

"It's been nothing but a positive experience," Jayne says regarding her time on Housewives. "It brought Erika Jayne out of the clubs and into living rooms nationwide." It sure did.

Other than flying on not one, but two private jets, the performer also spends much of her time fighting for issues that are important to her. In 2015, she received an LGBT Ally Award. "My roots run very deep. My relationship with the LGBT community goes way back," Jayne tells me. "These people are my friends, my mentors, my teachers."

It may seem like Erika Jayne has it all, but she always credits her outlook on life for her success. We've already established she gives no… well, you know. However, she also views the world from behind perpetual rose-tinted glasses.

"Internally, I still feel 18. You have to never lose your wonder and your hope, and never stop learning," Jayne says with regards to her inner youth. "It's when you become cynical, bitter and angry—that's when you start getting old. But those are old rules meant to be broken. Usually, those who criticize others, their lives are shit." Can I get an amen?

Talking to Jayne—whose day, by the way, consists of blasting Frank Sinatra in the car she borrowed from her husband for the morning, doing interviews, and shooting *Housewives*, a.k.a. the definition of glamour—makes me realize how life is a learning experience, for everyone… even for those who seem like they have it all figured out.

Erika Jayne's diva pop alter-ego may be all glitz and glam (and I wouldn't doubt it if her soul was coated in glitter) but on a sunny Los Angeles morning she shares her poignant wisdom with me, and it sticks. I can only hope to be half as cool and smart as she is, let alone when I'm 45.



THELMA & THE SLEAZE

PHOTOS / DANIELLE HOLBERT
STORY / AUGUSTA GAIL

Thelma and the Sleaze: The name alone is enough reason to listen to this one-of-a-kind band from Nashville, Tennessee. But these women are more than just a cool name—they're a seriously talented musical trio. They're rock n' roll laced with riot-grrrl punk and southern edge; they're raucous, and wild, and totally fucking badass in concert.

Here, on the eve of their hiatus, I chat with chat with vocalist/guitarist Lauren Gilbert (who goes by LG, by the way) about the band's recent tour with Eagles of Death Metal, what it's like hailing from the south, and how sex dreams are the best dreams.

Okay, so first and foremost: How was Thelma and the Sleaze born?
It was an offshoot of my [LG's] first band, Trampskirts, in 2006.
How did you all meet and form this wild and totally badass band?
Me and Chase met through Trampskirts shows and when Thelma's first drummer left, Chaste joined.
Do you consider yourself southern girls? How has Nashville shaped your music?
Living in the south has really help shape our music and how we carry ourselves. There's so many incredible people who have made music here and we try to pull inspiration from the history as well
What's your songwriting process? How do you come up with the lyrics and concepts?
I usually have a subject in mind. I'll sit with my guitar or bass and try to come up with something that gets whatever point across. Then I track it and play with the composition a dozen different way until it feels right.
Your music is full of loud, vibrant, messy girl power vibes. What are your thoughts on empowering girls and women through music? Is that something you're conscious of or is it more instinctual? If you could tell teenage girls anything, what would it be?
I think that whenever you make yourself vulnerable it's empowering in a way. Some of our songs are about the worst parts of being in a relationship but something about writing it down and playing it live helps you heal and grow. I hope that young girls follow their hearts and never compromise.
Okay, so your Kandyland Tour sounds like it was incredible. Can you tell us one crazy story that happened during the month-long awesomeness?
It was! We played during an ice storm outside which was really intense. Also this guy brought me his poetry about being a stalker to another singer and some candy. We didn't think about it and ate some anyways. Glad it was just candy.
How would you describe the Kandyland movie (which our readers should 100% check out)?
I hope it's a really good snapshot of where we were as a band. You know we have been around for 6 years in one form or another and have done a lot of things. There were probably collectively 200 people at all thirty Kandyland shows combined. I think it's pretty funny that we did this huge promotional thing and still didn't have that much of an impact. People talked about it a lot but they didn't really come out in herds. I think it will be more like Spinal Tap then The Wall. You will get an idea of how hard we work, which is important because we do work really hard. Also there are a handful of people who love us a lot and I hope they get some screen time.
Your live shows are supposed to be super fun and intense. How would you describe what goes down at a concert? What are people in for if they see you live?
I love performing as a longtime sober person. It's really my only outlet. I consider it a privilege to have an audience and I also try to connect with them in some way. Whether they are scared of me, turned on by me or want to be me.
Anything else we should tell our readers?
They should check out our new individual projects! "LG+Friends" from me, and Chase is currently playing with Boytoy. We are taking a hiatus for a while. We want to thank everyone for their support and love for the last five years, but it's what's best for us now.



SOFI TUKKER

STORY / LAUREN REARICK
PHOTOS / GEORGE VORDOS
MAKEUP / NATALIA BIZINHA FOR KETT COSMETICS
HAIR / PATRICK KYLE FOR BUMBLE & BUMBLE @ JUMP
CREATIVE DIRECTION / ALLEN HENSON

The heartbeat of Sofi Tukker can be heard pulsing beneath the beats of their music. During a whirlwind year of viral singles, taking SXSW by storm and supporting M83 on their summer tour, the duo comprised of Sophie Hawley-Weld and Tucker Halpern released their debut EP, *Soft Animal*, in 2016. The EP sees the band bringing an unrelenting dance party to listeners, with six tracks of energetic electro-pop. From the bubbly, slinky mystery of "Drinkee," to the guitar-driven "Déjà Vu Affair" which sparkles with an '80s sheen, the album is a culmination of two vastly different musicians coming together as one.

Hawley-Weld and Halpern met during an evening of music at their alma mater, Brown University. As Hawley-Weld performed an acoustic set, Halpern watched on, intrigued by the sounds he heard. As she began her final song, an idea struck him: "Before my DJ set began I went on during her last song and started speeding it up with backing beats," he said. "We just jammed out for awhile and we've been working together ever since."

While Hawley-Weld had long hoped for a career in music, her bandmate was forced to rethink a future in basketball after becoming sick his junior year. Unsure of what he wanted to do next, Halpern turned to music. Together, the pair became an unstoppable force, a combination of musical ideals.

"Sofi Tukker is where our two musical brains meet," he says. "Right in the middle of our two musical backgrounds is this sweet spot and that's where we are. Half of each of our brains created this being."

That "being" is fun, innovative dance music that leaves fans around the world moving and singing along. Hawley-Weld admits that neither saw what form the band would take when they began, but what they've created is something they poured their whole hearts into. Much of their recorded material is inspired directly by the reactions of fans, with the pair hoping their live performances embody the physicality of their music. Decking out the stage with a large book tree, the duo lose themselves in the music. It's not just a live performance, but a dance party; an unrelenting celebration of life.

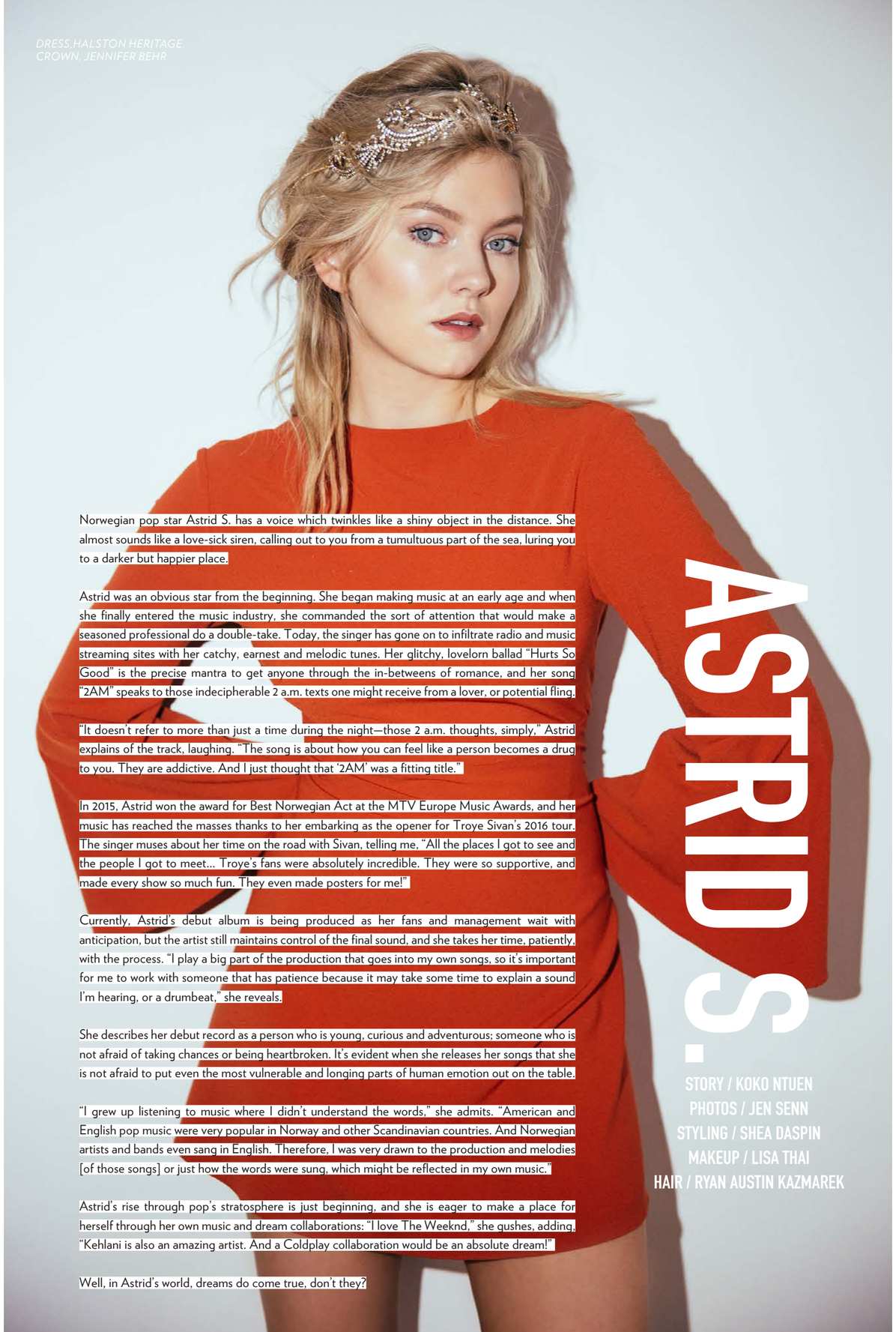
"The audiences are so receptive," Hawley-Weld shares. "It's been so fun, and we feel really lucky and inspired by the audience. We get more comfortable on stage each time we do it."

Her bandmate agrees, remarking that during much of the M83 tour the audiences really felt it. And as Sofi Tukker travels around the world with their music. they're finding that the language and meaning of Soft Animal translates no matter the country they arrive in.

"The craziest thing is seeing the different types of movement the audience makes," Halpern reveals. "Countries they don't necessarily speak the same language in are moving, and it's a really interesting study to see the different reactions."

Touring presents little downtime, but the pair are constantly at work on writing and brainstorming new material. Some of this future music even finds its way into live performances, along with tracks from Soft Animal. Many of their songs are inspired by what life feels like in that instant, and Halpern finds the whole process of writing and recording to be exciting: Working together, Sofi Tukker is hoping for a future of continued music, touring and enjoying each adventure as it comes. They consider each part of their career to be a special moment and an incredibly crazy journey.

"We're just becoming Sofi Tukker," Halpern muses. "We want to keep making the music we love. We want to connect with the audience and make them feel good, bring joy to our listeners. We're going to keep pushing and not get complacent."



DRESS.HALSTON HERITAGE.
CROWN, JENNIFER BEHR.

ASTRID S.

STORY / KOKO NTUEN
PHOTOS / JEN SENN
STYLING / SHEA DASPIN
MAKEUP / LISA THAI
HAIR / RYAN AUSTIN KAZMAREK

Norwegian pop star Astrid S. has a voice which twinkles like a shiny object in the distance. She almost sounds like a love-sick siren, calling out to you from a tumultuous part of the sea, luring you to a darker but happier place.

Astrid was an obvious star from the beginning. She began making music at an early age and when she finally entered the music industry, she commanded the sort of attention that would make a seasoned professional do a double-take. Today, the singer has gone on to infiltrate radio and music streaming sites with her catchy, earnest and melodic tunes. Her glitchy, lovelorn ballad "Hurts So Good" is the precise mantra to get anyone through the in-betweens of romance, and her song "2AM" speaks to those indecipherable 2 a.m. texts one might receive from a lover, or potential fling.

"It doesn't refer to more than just a time during the night—those 2 a.m. thoughts, simply," Astrid explains of the track, laughing. "The song is about how you can feel like a person becomes a drug to you. They are addictive. And I just thought that '2AM' was a fitting title."

In 2015, Astrid won the award for Best Norwegian Act at the MTV Europe Music Awards, and her music has reached the masses thanks to her embarking as the opener for Troye Sivan's 2016 tour. The singer muses about her time on the road with Sivan, telling me, "All the places I got to see and the people I got to meet... Troye's fans were absolutely incredible. They were so supportive, and made every show so much fun. They even made posters for me!"

Currently, Astrid's debut album is being produced as her fans and management wait with anticipation, but the artist still maintains control of the final sound, and she takes her time, patiently, with the process. "I play a big part of the production that goes into my own songs, so it's important for me to work with someone that has patience because it may take some time to explain a sound I'm hearing, or a drumbeat," she reveals.

She describes her debut record as a person who is young, curious and adventurous; someone who is not afraid of taking chances or being heartbroken. It's evident when she releases her songs that she is not afraid to put even the most vulnerable and longing parts of human emotion out on the table.

"I grew up listening to music where I didn't understand the words," she admits. "American and English pop music were very popular in Norway and other Scandinavian countries. And Norwegian artists and bands even sang in English. Therefore, I was very drawn to the production and melodies [of those songs] or just how the words were sung, which might be reflected in my own music."

Astrid's rise through pop's stratosphere is just beginning, and she is eager to make a place for herself through her own music and dream collaborations: "I love The Weeknd," she gushes, adding, "Kehlani is also an amazing artist. And a Coldplay collaboration would be an absolute dream!"

Well, in Astrid's world, dreams do come true, don't they?

LIANA BANK$



STORY / MIZ KANE
PHOTOS / ERIC T. WHITE
MAKEUP / MARK EDIO
HAIR / ELSA CANEDO
STYLING / JONATAN MEJIA

Liana Bank$ cut her teeth writing music for other ferocious powerhouses in the industry, including Rihanna and Nicki Minaj. Now on the cusp of releasing her debut mixtape *INSUBORDINATE*, the hip-hop, R&B newcomer has been dropping hot single after hot single, including swaggy "LVLUP," featured on HBO's *Ballers*. Born and raised in Queens, Bank$ has always approached her work with honesty and determination, citing dominant women like Nina Simone and Grace Jones amongst her role models. As sure as she is building out her musical repertoire, the neon-haired artist also recognizes the importance of building strength in character, always choosing honesty over anything else.

LADYGUNN had an opportunity to catch up with Liana before the release to discuss womanhood, heroes and emotional authenticity.

You're really open about standing your ground as a woman in the music industry and protecting your energy to get shit done. Do you ever feel like you have to forfeit your womanhood at times in order to be respected?

Definitely. A lot, actually. It's weird. I was just talking to my manager yesterday about that. A guy I did a song with, he told me to reach out to him. I [was] like, 'Okay, I wanna reach out, but when we were in the studio, I got a vibe that he was trying to kick it to me.' So I didn't want to close that down and have him not respect me or think that I was interested in the wrong way. He was like, 'Oh no, just hit him up.' I was like, 'You don't understand!' [Laughs] It has to be done a certain way. He'll think the wrong thing or whatever. There are always little steps I take to make sure I'm still respected, but still get business done at the same time.

Can you just go through your manager for that?

Yeah, definitely. There are other ways, but at the end of the day, I don't wanna just depend on my managers to do everything for me. I wanna be a strong businesswoman and be able to navigate those things myself. I'm just trying to prep myself for the future.

What do you think about the shifts in R&B? Where it was once more about emotion and love, it's now become more of this open expression.

I think I have a love/hate relationship for it. I like a balance. I think it's always cool to have a balance, just because no person is like, one way. We're humans, we have a huge array of emotions. To portray just one is just unrealistic, you know? At times I'm super aggressive, and at times I'm super loveable. I like to portray me as a human overall. I think that's important—to stay true.

If you could pick one song to describe yourself to other people, which would it be?

It would have to be a psycho song, because I'm crazy. Maybe like, probably..."Crazy" Cee Lo Green! There's so many elements to me and I think that song is all over the place. That would probably describe me.

Who are some strong women that you've always looked up to for guidance?

Grace Jones. Tina Turner. Beyonce. Michelle Obama. And even though a lot of people might not see her as strong: Marilyn Monroe. I feel like she was strong as far as completely embracing her sexuality and not caring or giving a fuck about what anybody thought. She played on who she was... Oh wait! Nina Simone! That's number one.

Why do you choose her above everybody else?

She's a whole other animal. She was completely outspoken. Just watching her perform is completely an experience: She's in the moment, in the song, and she believes in what she's saying, every single word. It's crazy. She was one of my huge inspirations musically, and as a person overall she definitely gives me strength.

Your songs sound like journal entries. What's the importance of humility and candidness to you?

Those are really important to me. Everything I write is truthful. I started writing from eight years old. They literally were journal entries—I wanted to start writing in a diary, but they turned into songs. So I started singing them and making melodies and I would write one every single day. It was literally my journal. And because I was so shy and scared to tell people how I was feeling, but I had so much passion, I kept writing and writing. Now, it's habit. Everything I'm feeling, sexually, emotionally, whatever, I write it down. They are definitely journal entries.

What kind of impression do you wanna make on the music industry or even in pop culture?

I just wanna be that person who is honest, more so than anything overall—honest with myself, accepting of my flaws. I feel, right now, everything's got a standard. You have to look a certain way, dress a certain way, talk a certain way. You can't be too this, too that. I think that's ridiculous. It's not realistic. You go out into the real world and nobody looks like Kim Kardashian. I think that's really it: being truthful and honest, and understanding that people are people. We all have feelings. We're all human and we're all flawed and it's okay. Life goes on.

I will always support that: being yourself and owning up to your truth and whatnot. All the fakeness is gonna fall at some point, so you might as well be honest.

Exactly. I used to try so hard to be goody two shoes. I have two younger sisters and I used to want to make the best impression for them, so I wouldn't do anything or act on certain things I felt. After a while I was like, 'This is like I'm in a jail. I can't be me. I can't express myself.'[But then you realize] you're just missing out on life. And life's too short to miss out on anything.



OYINDA

STORY / KOKO NTUEN

PHOTOS / JASON RODGERS @ THE BROOKS AGENCY NYC

STYLING /BIANCA BAILEY

HAIR & MAKEUP / PHOENIX

Oyinda is a mysterious figure in the new world. In a time where artists are drawn to viral fame, pop hits and sex! sex! sex!, the music she offers with its husky, enchanting allure and glitchy beats seems more substantial from a musician in pursuit of true artistry, brimming with layers of sounds and visions.

Not much is known of Oyinda. Glance at her Wikipedia page and it will leave you with little to create a full image with. She keeps it that way though, hiding underneath a long black mane and metal-adorned fingertips, letting only her music seep out. Her voice is an enigmatic instrument; her vocals neither push nor pull the music but rather allows it to swirl into the melody, carrying it through to the last note like a crowned monarch returning from battle. It's music that Nina Simone would no doubt listen to from beyond the grave, and she is someone who, unsurprisingly, greatly inspired Oyinda.

"Nina is a goddess," Oyinda says, her voice filled with admiration. "Listening to her so much definitely influenced me a lot. I wrote 'The Devil Is Gonna Keep Me' after I listened to her nonstop for a month. That's a song that I loosely based off of 'Strange Fruit.' That's the vibe that Nina's performance of that song just really evokes. I really appreciated her timbre and her tone."

The artist's calling to the music industry came full force when, in 2014, she booked her first show, Lollapalooza. Her booking was prompted by only two songs that were released online—"Rush of You" and "What Still Remains"—sending the Internet into a frenzy for more. Afterwards. Oyinda moved to New York where she continues to experiment and work on her craft today, but her beginnings weren't quite as musical as you might expect.

Oyinda grew up in London by way of Nigeria. Part of a traditional family, she was always expected to go on to be a doctor or a lawyer like most first generation Africans. Music was never a huge part of her upbringing.

"It's pretty complicated," she explains. "I don't come from a musical family. I didn't grow up with a lot of records or variety of [music] being played in the house. It was mostly like, the three CDs my mum was listening to, or maybe kids radio or Disney movies or what I'd watch on TV."

Oyinda continues, "Which is probably why I'm so influenced by film scores because all of the kids shows you'd watch growing up, a lot of the mood and everything is influenced by the music in the show. And shows that I still love today, like Samurai Jack, are all about the music rather than the dialogue. I thought that was really cool."

JEWELRY, CHRIS HABANA, THIRD CROWN. ALL CLOTHING, ADAM SELMAN. SHOES, THIRD CROWN.



RUBY THE RABBITFOOT

STORY / ALYSSA HARDY

PHOTOS / ALYSSE GAFKJEN

STYLING / CARMEN JAUDON @ CLOSET CASE VINTAGE

HAIR & MAKEUP / ALYSSA KRAUS

If there was only one word to describe Georgia-bred, Nashville-based singer-songwriter Ruby the Rabbit-Foot, it would be "refreshing." She's an artist whose progression can be heard across three full length albums: 2011's *No Weight, No Chains* is very much a girl and her guitar playing each song from the heart, while 2014's *New as Dew* holds those same sounds but with digital elements accompanying the acoustic background. And her third, most recent album, *Divorce*, shows a completely different side, with influence that is less country and more hip-hop.

"I had a heavier hand on the production so it's more electronic," Ruby explains. "I really studied the beats that I love in pop and hip-hop songs and learned how to make them."

Ruby grew up in Athens, Georgia, a gorgeous environment with mountains and beaches, an inspiring background for any artist. "I love Georgia. It's a really beautiful place," she shares, before talking about her musical childhood. "I think I was maybe like 7 or 8 when I first started playing around on the piano. Songwriting came later."

While Ruby's sound has certainly progressed over the years, her lyrics have remained deeply personal. Her single "Beach Flowers" is a heartbreaking ballad with a melody that's still poppy enough to get you dancing. "Lyrically, these songs were written when my last album came out, and I was touring for it," Ruby reveals. "I was going through a breakup and it was kind of a huge learning experience for me, and so I was writing a lot."

Listeners seem to empathise. On tour, Ruby says she has realized something very interesting about her audience: "We're convinced that daddies love it!" she laughs. "We call it daddy pop because all these daddies are coming to the show. I mean, young and old daddies."

Despite the fun that she's been having with dads as well as the rest of her audience, she shyly admits that touring is not at the top of her list of talents. "Touring is something that doesn't come very easily to me. I'm very grateful to have this tour and so I'm trying to enjoy every second of it. But I have never laughed as much as I have with this group of people I have this album."

Outside of album-making and touring, most millennial artists feel the need to put their everything into social media. But Ruby's modest following and irregular updates suggest that maybe she doesn't care too much about it.

"I actually wish that I was more on top of it," she sighs. "I wish that I was just super present but, also, I don't want to be on my phone all the time either." This humble Internet presence has also allowed her to ward off what many young artists constantly face: trolls. "I'm like, too wholesome, I have no haters," she jokes. "I actually read comments when I get them and everything seems pretty positive."

As she finishes up the first part of her album release and tour, there is a serious sense of humility and newness that she maintains that is, again, simply refreshing. "I would like to stay on tour longer with this album than I did with my last album," she reveals, "because I want to be a better live performer, and nothing makes you better than just playing every day."

BLOUSE, VINTAGE LILLI DIAMOND. CHOKER, VINTAGE (CIRCA 1950).

CRUEL YOUTH



STORY & STYLING / JONATAN MEJIA PHOTOS / MICHAEL CREAGH MAKEUP / TONY TULVE HAIR / ANDRITA RENEE

Don't call it a comeback: It's an evolution. After an unofficial three-year hiatus, Teddy Sinclair, the artist formerly known as Natalia Kills, has crept her way back to our hearts with her band Cruel Youth, starring herself and her husband, Willy Moon. This year, Sinclair released her excellent *30mg*, her first EP since killing off Kills (no pun intended)—a release which stationed her as both the reigning beauty and brains of alternative pop.

I believe every musician needs a subconsciously-created alter-ego to protect his or herself. Usually, the person singing surely differentiates from the actual individual behind the music. But like night and day, sitting down with Sinclair is not what I expect, in a wonderful way. Upon listening to her music, I did not know what to expect from Sinclair the person aside from certain intimidation courtesy of her more aggressive songs like "Problem," "Controversy," and "Kill My Boyfriend." Never judge a book by its cover, though: Immediately, Sinclair solidifies herself as one of the most welcoming artists I've ever met.

"I really wanted to make a record where all my loves were there," she tells me, her loves not being past lovers but rather her affair with music in general. And this is exactly what she concocts with 30mg, Sinclair sharing of her influences, "The Beatles, The Beach Boys, The Ronettes.... The feeling of Christmas, excitement, and mixing that with dirty and more aggressive sounds. Plus, I listened to loads of rap music growing up!"

What I adore so much about Sinclair is that she is emotionally grounded and hyper-aware of who she is. Music is a beautiful outlet for her because she carries herself with such great strength. It's empowering to know that just because she is a pop artist, it doesn't stop her from creating the record she wants to with conscious thought about the things that everyday people think about.

After all, pop can be both sad and fun. A perfect example of this is "Florida Blues." You can put your Ray-Bans on while cruising in a drop-top and still sing, "Baby, I know we won't make it" with a smile. Simply put, you can envision the sun while it's raining—maybe Cruel Youth is a little bit sunshine and downpour all at once.

Sinclair has a long journey to go as she continues her tough fight against a bout of unfavorable, arguably unfair publicity from a certain TV talent competition. (Sorry, X Factor New Zealand, I'm squarely on her side!) But did she ever really leave though? Technically, she has been blasting in our ears through the likes of Rihanna as well as Madonna, and she has just been waiting for the right time to reclaim her own throne.

After all, she says it best herself: **"I'm a fucking star."**



Being a pop star may look easy from the distance, but let's be real for a moment: It's never as glamorous as you'd like to think it is. There are expectations from the fans, from the label, from yourself. Now imagine being a pop star with a unique vision and never-ending flow of creative energy. Add some Northern European blood into the mix and worldwide exposure and you get a truly one-of-a-kind artist who is constantly re-discovering herself, whether she's penning songs for the likes of Demi Lovato, making goth-EDM collaborations or working on her own EPs. That's Estonian wonder girl Kerli.

She's an artist one may be tempted to place somewhere between Bjork, Lady Gaga and Imogen Heap, but who's arguably been a standalone figure on the music scene since her mid-00s debut. She's been involved with some L.A. big shots, released a major label album in 2008, but these days splits her time between the forests of Estonia and the big buck studios of California, working independently to make sure her vision remains intact. Ahead of her independent third album debut, we caught up with the ever-enchanting visual artist (as she likes to call herself) to discuss fairy tales, always traveling with one way tickets and connecting with nature.

Last year you left L.A. and moved back to Estonia. What made you return? What are the pros/cons of living in LA, and pros/cons of living in Estonia?

I made a pretty radical life change and moved to the woods to make art and live by myself for nine months. It was the kind of soul death/rebirth that I desperately needed and I regard this time as the most spiritually connected experience I have ever had... I've also started to spend some time in L.A. again. I always travel with a one way ticket and just feel it out since there's always someone I'm tragically missing. I love both of these spaces—the forest is where I go to cleanse and receive and the city is where I go to project and push forward.

Is it true that you discovered Bjork music on a metro station in Russia? Coming from Russia myself, I know the feeling.

Yes! Someone sold me an illegal copy of Best of Björk in a subway station in St. Petersburg when I was 14. I'd say that this criminal had excellent taste in music and I love him 'cause being able to stumble upon something that spoke to me on such a deep level, I feel like it really gave me something to live for.

KERLI

STORY / MIKHAEL AGAFONOV
HAIR / RYAN AUSTIN KAZMAREK
PRODUCTION / ERICA RUSSELL
MAKEUP / ERIC VOSBURG
STYLING / JONATAN MEJIA

Your musical style has changed dramatically over the years. What influences you the most during this ongoing shift?

I like to morph a lot, both as a human being and as an artist. It's all about tapping into energies, stories and feelings. It's exciting that we are these capsules; that we can harness and channel anything we can imagine. Also, I'm so happy to be in this space as an independent artist right now where I don't have anyone interfering with my vision. It's precious to operate from a place of self-reliance and personal truth.

How many hours a week do you spend in the woods/nature?

When I'm in Estonia, I almost never leave the woods. Last time I was there for a month and left twice. It was kind of insane.

What's your favorite fairy tale and why?

Old, dark, Eastern European fairy tales. I had this book called The Magic Flute when I was little and it had all sorts of dark stories in it. I still have it and still love it. I'm definitely looking for more mystery than your usual princess sitting around in a tower or sleeping for 100 years until the prince comes. My heroines turn into a wolf at night and rule dimensions.

How important are/what kind of dreams do you get? And do you ever get nightmares?

I do dream a lot and pay a lot of attention to symbolism, both in real-time and dream-time. I think my most precious dream was one where my animal totem came to claim me. It was so crazy and vivid but it's kinda sacred so I don't wanna talk about it too much. As for nightmares, I get a lot of those too. Usually it's about someone abandoning me.

Why is creating your own visuals so critical for you as an artist?

To me, it's not like it's just important: I consider myself a visual artist just as much as I do a musical artist. The sound and the picture are inseparable, so that's why I direct the videos, sketch the characters and hand make a lot of the costumes. It's all a canvas. I have never had a stylist, and I don't have a creative director.

What makes you feel empowered, whether in the studio or on stage?

Surrendering control and judgment and being completely present.



LIZZO

PHOTOS / MAEGHAN DONOHUE
HAIR & MAKEUP / TOMMY NAPOLI
RETOUCHING / JOHNNY PILS
STORY / CAMILE SARDINA

Indie hip-hop artist Lizzo is a feel-good queen who wears her fierce talent like a luxurious (faux) fur stole. A multitalented force, she raps, she sings, and she even hosts red carpets and television shows. At the 2016 MTV Video Music Awards Pre-Show, you may have seen her (in a gorgeous green gown, no less) hyping up the carpet thanks to her infectious energy and upbeat interviews with artists like Desiigner, Zara Larrson and Tinashe.

Or, if you're a *Broad City* fanatic, you've probably already felt the grooves of Lizzo—if you can remember Ilana and Abbi's bathroom montage that opened Season 3, Episode 1, the rap diva's contagious dance-pop track "Let Em Say," featuring Caroline Smith, was the scene's comfort food in sonic form: "And I love it, I love it / Baby hey, you should too!"

Truly, there is much to be said about the multi-layered Lizzo, from her spotlight-stealing style to her diverse fanbase to the fresh new projects she has lined up, both in music and television. So, we'll let her tell you for herself...

You're hosting MTV's new show, *Wonderland*. Would you describe the show to be like *TRL?* How are you preparing for it?
It's a live music show, but it's different than *TRL*. It's like watching a live stream of a festival with hosts. Every week we do research about our guests and we sit with writers and walk through what the best and worst thing that could happen is, and we facilitate the party each week. As the ball rolls, it's less work and more about having a good time.
In October, you released your EP, Coconut Oil. What's the meaning behind it?
The entire album hasn't come out yet, so we decided to put out a little sample platter. But all my albums have these themes of self-exploration and self-love, and that's what I was going through with *Coconut Oil*. I was taking care of myself and I did healthy things like using coconut oil. And I wanted to connect to women of color more too, so coconut oil was a perfect metaphor for the project.
Ironically, I read that your audience is largely white, but that you're trying to reach more black women.
Yeah, I'm making music about being a big black woman and those are the people I'm making the music for, because they're myself, but I love when my music speaks to people who don't look like me. I'm extremely appreciative and kind of blown away by the reach these songs are having. I'm blessed to be able to sing even in front of one person.
And who, or what, are some of your musical influences?
I'm influenced a lot by gospel music. Worship is the first song I wrote for this project and I remember being like, whoa, where is this coming from? I'm rapping less and singing more so I wanted to explore that. You can hear it on songs like *Coconut Oil* and Scuse Me, where it gets a bit religious in there.
I'm obsessed with your style! Where does your fashion inspiration come from?
That's all in the hands of Quinn Wilson. She's my style dog. She evolved into my creative director. Diana Ross is a huge influence on Quinn and therefore a huge influence on me. She was the epitome of really glam and natural, but also really clean and not overdone. We're going for Afro-centric retro. I also discovered a well of curvy bloggers, and finding a community like that is inspirational. I was used to seeing girls in size 0. Seeing women like Ashley Graham has been really exciting, and to see high fashion on a body that looks like me.
No matter the fan, what do you want listeners to take away from your music?
I want them to feel good! I want them to feel as good as I feel when I'm creating. We're going to do everything in our power to make sure that happens.

TYLER GLENN

PHOTOS / DANIELLE ERNST
STYLING / JUSTIN LYNN
GROOMING / ANGELO RIVERA
STORY / WENDY LU

JACKET, DANIEL SILVERSTAIN . T-SHIRT, IRO. PANTS,RESURRECTION JYL. SHOES, VANS.

Tyler Glenn, known as the lead singer of Utah-based rock band Neon Trees, has gone through a lot in recent years. In April 2014, he publicly came out as a gay Mormon in a *Rolling Stone* interview, perhaps one of very few Mormon stars to do so. Now a former member of the Mormon Church, Glenn has continued to use music as a means for self-expression during this journey to embrace his identity sans religion.

Around the same time that he came out, Glenn began writing solo material and hasn't stopped since. In October, he releases his first solo album, *Excommunication*, a musical diary chronicling the past several months of his life. We spoke to the artist about his writing rituals, *Excommunication* album highlights and how coming out has influenced his music.

How is your new album different from other projects you've done?
The sound is a little bit more aggressive at times, and then it's a little more adventurous at times. That probably came from the fact that I just made it myself. Thematically, it's pretty much about the last 10 months of my life and the highs and lows of a paradigm shift, a transition. There's different emotions that I'm expressing. As much as it sounds like a personal thing, I think it's also just a record that sounds cool.
Can you go into more detail about the inspiration behind the record?
About 10 months ago, the Mormon Church released a policy saying that same-sex couples aren't welcome in the church, and that drew a line in a sense. The past year of my life has really been [about] asking big questions, exploring how to be happy and how to try to be a happy gay Mormon or happy gay man. There's a lot of personality in the record and a lot of emotions that I'm covering. I think by the end it sounds hopeful and joyful. There's also pain in it as well.
This year has been difficult for the LGBT community and other marginalized groups. How did you deal with the Orlando shooting and how have these events affected your journey as a gay man?
I think, in the last year, I've really embraced the idea that I'm divinely gay. If I'm gay, it's because I was born that way...Orlando absolutely shook me, it shook my mother. I go to those types of places to have fun with friends, and I totally understood the pain and sadness because it felt absolutely close to home and it's devastating. I think it's contributed to my desire to use music as a platform and, not that this record is pushing ideas down anyone's throats, but it's definitely confronting things that I've been facing the last little while in my own life, and I think it's applicable in the larger LGBT community and, I think, anyone's life.
Did creating this album serve as catharsis for you?
I think it's absolutely a cathartic album to make. But I had a really positive experience coming out. I felt a lot of support and what's been exciting is those that have been sort of following my life – that's even weird to say. To me it's just weird. But people have been following the story and it's interesting. I think to them, hearing these songs and seeing me be authentic is really the ultimate reward for them.
How did you come up with the album's name?
Excommunication in the religious world is sort of a scary word. So I started having no fear about excommunication more and I like taking that word and kind of reclaiming it. And also, there are themes of betrayal between me and my ex-boyfriend. There are a few songs that address that. So in a sense, it's a play on words. Excommunication. I just love it. I think it's just really striking.
What's next for you?
I'm doing this record and I'm gonna play shows in support of it. I'm super focused on this right now. I'm excited to get it out and to keep sharing my story.

HIGHLY SUSPECT

PHOTOS & SET DESIGN / MAEGHAN DONOHUE
GROOMING / TOMMY NAPOLI
STYLING / SHANDI ALEXANDER @ THE BROOKS AGENCY
PHOTO ASSISTANT / JASON DUNN
RETOUCHING / JOHNNY PILS
STORY / KOKO NTUEN

JOHNNY: JACKET, ROBIN'S JEANS . RYAN, T-SHIRT, ZARA. RICH: T-SHIRT, MCID

‘OH, YOU’RE HOMOPHOBIC, WOW, WHAT A BITCH / I ALMOST WANT TO BLOW YOUR MIND / AND JUST GO SUCK A DICK.’

SHIRT, VINTAGE, STYLISTS OWN.
RINGS, LADY GREY, LHN JEWELRY, SHANNON KOSZYK.
NECKLACES, LADY GREY.



SILVER JACKET, ZARA. SHIRT, ADIDAS.

"You're the first person I've spoken to today," Johnny Stevens informs me over the phone. I can hear him stretching out in his bunk on the Highly Suspect tour bus, where the lead singer of the band is just waking up. They are on the road to their next gig, somewhere on the west coast. I'm on the other side of the world in my pajamas, and Johnny is coincidentally the last interview of the day for me.
"We can be tired together," he says into the receiver.

It makes for a nice split-second, alternate universe fantasy: I think of Johnny's Ryan Gosling circa *The Place Beyond the Pines*-esque tattooed face and checkered past. He draws a parallel in this sense—he's very open about his upbringing and the turbulent cycles of his life in his music. He, along with band-mates and twin brothers Rich and Ryan Meyer, grew up on the outskirts of Cape Cod, in the sleepy town of Yarmouth, Massachusetts. Since their formation in 2009, the men have played well over a thousand live shows all over the world, amassing a legion of adoring fans globally, and a very warm welcome each time they come home to their adopted city of Brooklyn. Best friends who met in high school, they bonded over music and drugs before becoming famous rock stars.

Johnny laughs when he recounts his first meeting with Ryan, telling me, "We met at a pyramid scheme style event. Basically, we were brought in by a friend to come check out this company that's like, 'If you sell two hundred phone books, we'll give you fucking 20 percent commission.' Pyramid scheme bullshit. We were all sitting there and my friend said, 'Hey, this is lame, let's go smoke a joint.' So we went out to his car. That's how Ryan and I met, over a joint, talking about music. We didn't hang out again after that for a while. But then I met his brother at a party. His brother came in on a motorcycle and had a guitar on his back, and I showed up to the party in the same way. So we were kinda feeling the same thing—let's jam, let's play a song. It turned into what it is today. Somehow, it morphed from hanging out in high school to traveling the world..."

...Then going on to be nominated in not one, but two categories for their sophomore feat, *Mister Asylum*, at 2015's Grammy Awards: Highly Suspect was a contender for both Best Rock Song for their hit "Lydia," as well as for Best Rock Album. That album gained a lot of traction among hardcore fans and opened doors to new adoration from music blogs, magazines and the Internet which suddenly propelled the band to new heights. Johnny acknowledges the nomination graciously.

"One of the cool things about the Grammys, one of the things that was really humbling was that the people that actually nominate the songs and the artists are industry people. And you know how crazy this fucking industry is. You know how careful you have to be when navigating it and shit. To know that there were enough people within the industry that had our backs... That was really awesome. That felt really good."

Highly Suspect is difficult to categorize in the same way Nirvana was when they first came out. Abstract and a bit strange at times, they draw influences from multiple genres in a pleasant cacophony. It's melodic grunge, punk and soul with lots of two-minute guitar riffs that sort of make you want to engage in antics of every kind. I have to admit, there is nothing more encouraging than having Johnny Stevens yell, "Dance, dance motherfucker!" through my speakers. The band is complete chaos in their delivery, their distorted guitars and Johnny's seductive vocals creating a perfect disharmony: It's for the psychopath living inside all of us.

The themes which Highly Suspect cover in their discography deal with heavy issues in a candor that is refreshingly free of overproduction or premeditated scripts. Johnny grew up without his mom; he's been through addiction and crazy breakups and he is completely transparent when he croons on songs which explore issues that are still stigmatized. Instead, he leaves them wide open for discussion—and dancing, too.

"There are real issues that a lot of people go through and are afraid to talk about," he shares. "They look for songs that talk about things that matter to them. I think it's important. It helps me get things off my chest. It's overwhelming to see how many people struggle. People will tell me how much a song has helped them and I know they're actually listening."

The singer-musician is bashful when he says this, shy even, and it's hard not to love the contrast between his hooligan-like aesthetic and the down-to-earth, good-natured gentlemen that I'm speaking with now. When I mention that I find our conversation endearing, he tells me, "There's just too many fucking tough guys in rock."

It's been years since Johnny's rocky upbringing and the angst and confusion of his twenties. He seems like he's found a nice stride through the tragedies and obstacles that have seemed to always surround him, and he came out on the winning side. "I've settled into a really good groove," he says confidently, adding, "At this point, I recognize who I am, this career path. I recognize that fans and friends depend on this. And I'm having more fun than I've ever [had] in my life. In the past two or three years, especially in the past year, it's been getting better and better. Life has been blessed."

Although Johnny may not rely so deeply on his inner pain for material these days, there is no shortage of need for his confrontational music considering all the craziness in the world right now. And he has little reservation about confronting current politics. The band's third studio album, *The Boy Who Died Wolf*, will be released November 18, 2016. This is a fast, by industry standards, follow up to *Mister Asylum*. On this record, the guys delve deeper into life and all its complexities and adversities.

"I think it's our best work to date," Johnny says enthusiastically. "I'm so fucking excited to put that out. I don't think there's any need to wait years and years between albums."

Johnny pauses before confiding in me, "There's a song on the album we're about to put out, it's called 'Viper's Strike.' It's a super funny name, but I'm nervous to put it out, because it's directly, very transparently dealing with my hatred for racism and homophobia. The lyrics are pretty intense. One of the lyrics is, 'Oh, you're homophobic, wow, what a bitch / I almost want to blow your mind / And just go suck a dick.' Pretty intense lyrics! Another one says, 'Oh, you're racist, jeez, that's neat / Guns don't kill people, white people kill black people with guns / Is it hard to hear?.' There's no white, straight men talking about Black Lives Matter. There's no white straight men talking about the recent killings."

He pauses for another moment before he continues: "I'm very much aware that there are a lot of fans who are moved because of these issues. Any time I dabble in anything that actually means something, like when I talk about shit on TV, there's backlash. I'm aware of that, but I'm like, 'Cool, that's the type of fame I want around.' We have this thing called M.C.I.D. (My Crew Is Dope). Anybody's invited, just don't be racist, don't be homophobic. That's it. Don't be an asshole. That's part of our lifestyle approach, which is bigger than the band. I'm fucking excited to put out those lyrics on that album, which is maybe more poignant than the last one, and see what kind of reaction we get from it. I think, if anything, at least we'll have a better audience."

Ironically, Johnny is at his best when he is in front of a crowd. It's a relationship built on trust and respect that has building mutually on both sides of the stage over the years. The band's dedication to touring and honest, unpretentious music has made their crowd a mosh pit they can lean on, and it's a powerful feeling.

"I can actually feel the vibe and see exactly how powerful this music is to some people," Johnny muses. "It's breathtaking. The most powerful moment is when I'm singing a song, I'll test out the waters a little and stop singing for a second, and suddenly I'll have a bunch of people singing the words back to me. That's powerful."



TUNIC, ARIANNE ELMY.

MØ

STORY / RUTH JIANG
PHOTOS / JINGYU LIN
STYLING / ABIGAIL LIPP
HAIR & MAKEUP / MAEGAN REBECCA

Beyond her vocals, the most mesmerizing thing about MØ is the way she dances. In live performances, she sways her body in a carefree way, reminiscent someone on the dancefloor who doesn't really care what other people think. Jaunty yet graceful, often with a high plaited, attention-seeking braid, MØ is a performer through and through. Yet her vocals still manage to cut through glass when heard live—articulate and strong.

When I spoke with MØ over the phone, I was curious about how these two elements—being live versus being in a recording—differ. But as I found out, she actually sees the two in the same light, explaining that "when you're live and there in the moment before the eyes of so many people, it's such a different situation than when you're recording."

"In both situations, you're super vulnerable and super naked but it's in two very different ways, if you know what I mean," she adds. "It's hard to explain. I think, live…you're more socially aware and, not in a bad way, but you have this urge to approach people and touch them right there in person."

"EVERY TIME I TRY TO CONSTRUCT A DIFFERENT IDEA OF WHO I AM, I'VE FAILED 100%."

MØ has a streak of genuine rawness that can't be manufactured, which sounds a bit incredulous since the music she's been releasing recently is so well-suited for mainstream radio. It's not so much trying to uphold the persona she is projecting; instead, if she were to do anything else, it just wouldn't work. "Every time I try to construct a different idea of who I am, I've failed 100%. I haven't planned on changing my image in any way," she tells me firmly.

Her conviction in this well-learned life lesson naturally explains her desire to make pop music that isn't just generic fodder. In her voice, I can hear the element of earnest conviction when she says, "I hope, I pray that you can make pop music and reach a wide audience but still put your personality in it and still try to make a difference even though it's mainstream. I do represent both things and I want to continue to do that because I can't do either or."

MØ 's success in the realm of pop can be attributed to her collaborations with some of music's top artists. She provided the vocals, after all, on the hugely popular single "Lean On" by Major Lazer. The song is Spotify's most streamed track of 2015, sitting at well over 836 million streams (at the time of our interview, anyway). More recently, the Major Lazer-produced, Billboard Top 10 track "Cold Water" also features the artist's songwriting and vocals, alongside the voice of one Justin Bieber.

However, it's not just big names that make a song successful. There has to be something else, of course, that makes people want to revisit a song long after the radio has blasted it into near exhaustion. What makes a good, long-living pop song? To this question, MØ adamantly responds, "I think it has a pretty simple structure, not too complicated. At the same time, it has to be its own thing. I think it's very important that in the production and in the vocals that there's something organic or human or different. Some kind of weirdness, but not too much because people won't be able to relate to it and then it won't be a pop song."

One of the most recognizable songs from her 2014 album, *No Mythologies to Follow*, has to be "Fire Rides," a dark, lightning-laced track that touches upon insightful themes like restlessness and loneliness. However, the two of the singles MØ released in 2016—"Final Song" and "Kamikaze"—are vibrant and bright-sounding; tropical and a vast step away from the material of her more indie-leaning last album. And while she mentions that for this new album, "some would say it's more pop, some wouldn't, I don't know," it sounds to me like MØ has never particularly thought very hard about what "genre" her music falls into precisely.

Instead, what seems to matter at the end of the day is that the songs MØ wants to release with her new album are genuine: "Even though I've done some songs where I was like, 'Oh, this is actually not me,' I just ended up not wanting to put them on my album. I'm definitely getting close to finishing the whole thing. These songs I definitely feel personally attached to. So yeah, it will be different but it is still very much me."

Sounds promising, and by all obvious indicators, we listeners will just have to take her word for it.



DRESS, VALENTINO.
SHOES, LANVIN.

YUNA

STORY / ALYSSA HARDY
PHOTOS / VICTORIA STEVENS
STYLING / ASHLEY PRUITT
MAKEUP / AYAKA NIHEI

Yuna is sitting quietly in the corner of a bustling studio. The R&B star's black booties dangle over the footrest of her chair, her hijab wrapped tightly around her head, and as the makeup artist finishes, she looks at herself nonchalantly in the mirror. She is breathtaking. Her big brown eyes are soft and kind as she modestly brushes off the compliments people are tossing her way...

In the landscape of rising stars, singer-songwriter Yuna is unique. She was born and raised in Malaysia and is a practicing Muslim, a piece of her identity she wears proudly. Now at 29, with a new album, *Chapters,* released with much critical acclaim, she is ready to break out of the mold and release music that speaks to who she really is. The first single, "Crush," featuring Usher, has throwback R&B vibes that will make you feel like an emotional teenager in a life-altering romance. "Crush" is sweet and fills the room with the artist's unmistakable honeyed voice. The rest of the record follows suit, with catchy lyrics and smooth melodies.

With *Chapters* out and her 30th birthday around the corner, Yuna is ready to take on the music industry, cultural stereotypes and a new chapter of her life by storm. See what we did there?

How did you get your start in the music industry?
I started out writing music in Malaysia. I used to go to all these contests and competitions, auditioning for TV shows and stuff like that. Back home in Malaysia, those things were huge... Honestly, I was really young, and I always knew that I was not an amazing singer. The way I sing my songs is very relaxed. I don't force my vocals, so at the time I felt like I just needed to stop doing music and focus on law school.

In my second year, I started making friends with a lot of independent musicians... I was just like, "wow, that's so cool!" I had no idea that existed. I thought that if you want to make music, you have to be signed to a record label. So, I started writing my own songs and learning how to play the guitar. I started recording my own stuff and putting up on MySpace music, and a lot of people got excited about it. I started performing at jazz cafes. I was in school studying to become a lawyer, but after I graduated, I just focused on the music thing and moved out to Los Angeles.

You moved from Malaysia to Los Angeles at 24. It's been five years now—how has the transition been?
Yeah, it takes time, and you learn a lot about yourself, too. Sometimes, I feel like I'm a little more chill here than back home in Malaysia, because there [Malaysia] people stop me for photos. I just can't walk down the street anymore. People Snapchat me, and I can't really be by myself. I can't go out by myself and just like to have coffee or hang out and not have anybody come up to me. Living in America, I can still do that. On a personal level, I really like how I can be myself here, because I love doing that.

Now that the album is out and you've done some shows what has it been like?
I'm proud of it; I can still listen to it without skipping any tracks. It's a good feeling, not that I don't love my previous projects, but there were some songs where I was like, "ehh I wish I could change up a little bit." But for this record, I wouldn't change a thing... "Crush," is doing really well... It's on the radio! I've never had my song on the radio. It's like number ten!

What was it like when you heard your song on the radio for the first time?
I flipped out. When we released "Crush," the day after that, I went to have sushi for dinner just like across the street from where I live... They were playing the radio...and "Crush" came on. I heard the intro, so I was freaked out... That was my first time listening to my own song on the radio. I never had that in years working over here on my music.

You're turning 30 soon. Are you excited?
I was thinking about this. Where I come from, when you're 30, you're just like... old. If you're single, you just kind of feel a little bit behind, because all your friends are married with children. And I was kind of struggling with that. But even though I don't now, I'm so happy... I'm 29; I have my album out; I have music recorded with Usher. I'm really just counting my blessings.

Outside of your music, you are a proud Muslim. What is it like for you as a Muslim in the U.S., given the political climate and with what happened in Orlando?
It's crazy, because when I first moved out here, it was a phobia; it has always been in the back of my mind. How to tackle this? What if people are just going to put me in a box? One person does not represent 2 billion people. It was definitely a rough time to be going through right now. [Editorial note: This was one week after the Orlando massacre.] What happened in Orlando is so devastating...and two or three days after Muhammed Ali died. He's a huge hero. Up until the day he died, he really fought for what we all stand for, what the majority of Muslims are standing for. It's a peaceful religion. We do not believe in violence. Obviously [those that do] they're psychotic. I'm just trying to inspire people to believe in peace and love again and telling them that I am proof of that. I believe in my religion, I practice it, and I am trying to make the world a better place. There's millions of people who are just like me. As far as the politic thing is going, I'm not from here. I don't really know what to say about political issues like Trump. American Muslims were born and raised out here, and they

JACKET, MAGGIE NORRIS COUTURE.
PANTS, LANVIN.



"I'M MUSLIM. THAT'S WHO I AM. I'M NOT RUNNING AWAY FROM IT."

support what I do, and I support them as well. I support their well-being, and I just really want peace. And I hope you all try to stand together against violence, against terrorism and not just like point fingers. I'm Muslim. That's who I am. I'm not running away from it. I'm not hiding it. I just want people to know that, you know, there's a yin and yang in everything, and if one of us decides to do something like violent, we are not for that, we do not stand for it. We weren't raised to do this. It's psychotic, that's all. That's all it is.

Of course that's obvious to most of us, but it's interesting to hear your perspective.

You can't condone such action. It's disgusting. And it's like, for me, I have a lot of friends from the LGBT community, and they have their own struggles. I just don't know how someone can be so evil.

What's next? What are you hoping for within the next couple of months?

I think I'm really starting to go back on the road. I want to work on more music obviously. I also want to work with other producers and keep all this momentum going. I'd love to, in the future, be on someone else's record and write for other artists, not just stop at Chapters. I want to get into fashion as well. I'm releasing a clothing line, that's a collaboration between me and my friend Hasa; he's a Malaysian designer. I'm excited for that.

TURTLENECK, M.PATMOS.

PEACHES

STORY / AMY BERKOWITZ
PHOTOS / GEORGE PITTS
STYLING / ALISON ISBELL
MAKEUP / COLBY SMITH
HAIR / MICHAEL MORENO
CREATIVE DIRECTION / SPENCER KOHN

Throughout her long and prolific career, Peaches has steadily courted controversy, from 2000's breakthrough electroclash hit "Fuck the Pain Away" to her most recent release, *Rub*—an eclectic pop album that features tracks with titles like "Dick in the Air." But Peaches isn't just out to shock. Instead, her predilection for profanity and pornography is in service of a radically wholesome goal: She's interested in dismantling the toxic orientation our culture has towards the human body and preaching a gospel of self-love and acceptance. And if lyrics about dicks and clits happen to garner attention, well, that's even better.

Recently, I had the opportunity to chat with Peaches on the phone about her commitment to body positivity and how it's expressed in her work.

I started by asking the musician about the way her performances address the objectification of women's bodies, and she quickly turned the conversation to men's bodies. Why? Well, because nobody really does that. "The focus on body issues has always been on women," Peaches explained. "The fact that we're even having these conversations is way more advanced than two straight mean having a conversation about their body image because... it wouldn't really happen." Indeed, patriarchal culture is damaging to men as well as women, and as the more privileged, less objectified group, men may lack the words to talk about their own oppression.

Peaches has taken it upon herself to change this. In "Dick in the Air," she puts the focus on a body part infrequently addressed in pop music, with lyrics that explain the change of pace: "We've been shaking our tits for years / So let's switch positions, no inhibitions, fears." The accompanying video is pure fun: She and comedian Margaret Cho gallivant around Los Angeles dressed in pink and yellow full-body yarn suits complete with pubic hair and genitals.

"Shake Yer Dix" is a song on 2003's Fatherfucker with a similar message. "There's a million of those songs [for women]," Peaches said. "This one is empowering men to shake their stuff. To have a way in." But a way in to what? Does an invitation to shake something (I think of Booty Bass's "Shake that ass, bitch / And let me see what you've got") offer empowerment, offer anything more than objectification? I have the sense that Peaches thinks it could, in her relentless body positivity. But her statement can also be taken as a sly "invitation" for men to experience the harassment women do. Maybe it's something in between. Regardless, her turning the tables results in a refreshing change from the status quo.

Speaking of a refreshing change from the status quo, the video for "Rub," her latest album's title track, sets the sleazy, beat-driven, no-inhibitions anthem against the background of a decadent and surreal Joshua Tree orgy that features bodies of various sizes, races, and genders writhing and grinning together. I wish this representation of diverse embodiments of sexuality wasn't rare enough to feel as revolutionary as it does, but I'm still grateful for it. I was glad to see some Vimeo comments echoing my appreciation ("WHOA. BOLD. It's about time! Refreshing to see some real bods doing some real bod part things."), and unsurprised to read the less-respectful comments.

I asked Peaches what she thought about viewers' responses. "I think for some people it's definitely challenging, but I say too bad," she replied. "And I was proud of a lot of the comments. You expect it to just be 'ew gross ew hairy vagina ew trans person ew uh uh' but there were a lot of really intelligent comments going on, which I was so surprised and happy about."

Peaches is interested in visibility and respect for all kinds of bodies. The closing track of *Rub* includes a shout-out to a population that doesn't get much attention in pop culture: people who are chronically ill. As a woman living with fibromyalgia and the co-organizer of an illness activism conference called *Sick Fest*, I was excited to hear Peaches calling out my people in "I Mean Something." The chorus of the song, which features gorgeous vocals from Feist, goes "No matter how old, how young, how sick / I mean something, I mean something."

I asked what Peaches meant by the word, and she explained that she was interested in its dual meaning. It could mean "sick, like if you have a debilitating disease or you're not feeling well or you have mental health issues... or sick as a way of saying, 'I'm the sickest, I'm awesome.'" Her interest in chronic illness visibility may be related to her relationship with her sister, who has MS and uses a wheelchair. Referencing the song's title, Peaches said, "[my sister] means something, and sometimes I think it's hard for her to remember that about herself, to stand up for herself."

And that's really what her message is, if you wanted to distill it into one sentence: Peaches wants to remind anyone listening that they mean something, that their body means something, matters, deserves love and respect. It might not sound like such a radical proposition, but in our culture, with its gender policing and body shaming? It's pure rebellion.

DRESS, GROUND ZERO.
RINGS, SNASH JEWELRY.



LIONBABIES

MEEOOW!!!

STORY / ALYSSA HARDY & MIZ KANE

PHOTOS / RACHEL THALIA FISHER

STYLING / KAT BANAS

MAKEUP / YUUI VISION USING USING M.A.C

HAIR / CHUCK AMOS FOR PANTENE @ JUMP

CREATIVE DIRECTION / ERICA RUSSELL

JILLIAN: JUMPSUIT, PHs. COAT, KIM SHUI. RINGS, SYD & PIA NYC. BRACELET, LHN JEWELRY. EARRINGS, TULESTE. BOOTS, ASOS.
LUCAS: SHIRT, NIFTY THRIFTY VINTAGE. JACKET, ASOS. TROUSERS, TOPMAN. SNEAKERS, CONVERSE.



JILLIAN:
DRESS, ADAM SELMAN. BUSTIER, CHROMAT. CHOKER, JOANNA LAURA CONSTANTINE. BRACELETS, IOSSELLIANI.

LUCAS:
JACKET, RAFI & OLGA. TOP, ALTERNATIVE APPAREL. TROUSERS, DZOJCHEN. BOOTS, UNDERGROUND

Contrary to popular belief, Lion Babe is not a person. It's a band. Many who have heard of them immediately think of their larger-than-life lead singer, Jillian Hervey—daughter of iconic singer and actress Vanessa Williams—without realizing that she is actually one half of an extremely talented whole. The full group, comprised of Hervey and producer Lucas Goodman, has taken the music and the fashion industry by storm with their soulful, transformative tracks and intrepid sense of style that permeates through genre. Onstage, Hervey sings front and center, tossing her enormous mane of curls while Goodman stands stage right, rocking out on the keyboard. They have an undeniable presence that comes with natural chemistry, and it's intoxicating.

Offstage, the singer has become a symbol of confidence and self love. Most recently, she starred in an H&M campaign that featured the band's groovy cover of Tom Jones' "She's a Lady." Between her expressive fashion sense and gorgeous natural hair, she has taken control of her personal style narrative, empowering many others to do the same. In the press, she has been compared to everyone from Tina Turner to Chaka Khan, but when you see the band live, you can't help but perceive her as uniquely herself. Her sound is masterfully balanced thanks to Goodman's neo-soul backbeats and her movement is as breathtaking as it is entertaining.

"I think it's nice to have a little bit of healthy tension in music sometimes," Hervey explains of their dynamic. "I think that's reflective of where we are now in the world with everything going on."

As the pair continues to release more music, they find themselves constantly evolving and melding into each other more and more. Their aesthetic and sound is only a small part of what makes them special, and their future is full of endless possibilities. Here, we speak to the band about finding balance, creating a space for representation, and, of course, big, bold hair.

You have spoken about the origin of the name "Lion Babe" in the past as a representation of strength and vulnerability. How do you believe this dynamic appears in your music?
Jillian Hervey: On my end, when I think of the lyrics and stuff, I try to write from the heart and give people a real sense of who I am. And our songs, even talking about love or issues that everyone experiences or some kind of journey of finding yourself—that whole process can be very powerful. Once you start to deal with those things, it makes you very strong. You build a resilience within yourself of being able to do whatever life throws at you. I think that dynamic is in there in what we like to write about.

There's definitely plenty of room in the sound. The silence is heavy.
JH: It's the yin and yang.

Lucas, do you feel like you're the softer side or do you feel like you both change positions as you find balance?
Lucas Goodman: Yeah, I think Jillian and I, we go in our natural areas when we're together.
JH: I would say it's a mix. There's times where he might give me a harder beat or something, and then my response might be something out there. We always try to play with that idea as well. Keep it interesting.

People usually bring up that you're the daughter of Vanessa Williams, Jillian, but many times when someone is the child of a well-known celebrity, it overpowers their craft. In your situation, it seems like it doesn't even affect it. Have you noticed that?
JH: I think that's always just been a life goal. I've always wanted to be my own person and have my own career, my own credibility, and my own connections—all those things. It was pretty easy because it's been in my family. My mom and dad have taught me to be very independent. They're obviously there for help, but with anything when you're growing up, the last thing you wanna do is ask your parents to help you out. You want to prove to them that you're a strong person, do your own thing. I've never been a person that walked up to someone saying, "Hi, I'm Jillian, this is my mom." It's never happened! I would never do it.

Just listening to your music, it's not like you think of your mom or anyone else.
JH: Yeah, yeah. It's nice. Obviously, people don't know my whole family, but between me and my whole family we have a lot of artsy people all around us. That's why I've been very supported to go down this road. For us, it's kind of what a lot of people do in our family: they're passionate about something and then they build something up for themselves. It's kind of inevitable that we do our own thing.

When people think of Lion Babe they think of Jillian mostly, both aesthetically and sonically: the hair, her presence, even just hearing her on the track. You guys play up that whole Blondie/Debbie Harry dynamic. Is that purposeful?
LG: For us, it's the band. Lion Babe is the two of us together. We do what we gotta do to get going.
JH: He's just really confident in general.

With you, Jillian, you're very expressive about your femininity without even having to use words. Not everyone is very comfortable with their femininity, yet you own it unapologetically. Were you always like that?
JH: Definitely not! I had my awkward girl time a decade ago, growing up. I had a lot of friends, I kept very busy, I was always out doing stuff. I've always been adventurous in that way. But of course, I grew up with body issues. I grew up in a predominantly white house, so I didn't have a lot of references to other girls who looked like me or who had my hair texture. Obviously, my family was a great anchor to [remind me] that I had a part in that world. I definitely think New York in general and growing up and immersing myself in jazz and things that I was really passionate about [helped with that]. Once I got to a place as an artist and performer, feeling comfortable, going into New York and seeing everyone... It was all the colors of the rainbow. All these people being really expressive and individual. There was a New York energy that just felt like everyone's focused. They have their hustle. You get changed somehow, but you also don't. I think it's just one of those things where you feel it and accept it. So, I really embraced that and took off with it. I think my evolution of being comfortable with myself definitely started in college. They always say, "In college, find yourself." I was skeptical, but I do think it played a big part of finding my voice and being comfortable with myself.

You said you grew up in an all-white neighborhood and didn't really see that representation of people with the same hair or that looked like you. Is it important for you to represent black women in your image?
JH: When Lucas and I started meeting and talking, we definitely started talking about our heritage and our culture. When we did the first video, "Treat Me Like Fire," that was our first time really thinking about it. But it wasn't calculated or anything like that. It just reflected the message of the song. For me, it was the first time in a long time I was wearing my hair natural, having my extensions out and all that stuff. So when I had the video, it was an opportunity to have this goddess version of myself, this otherworldly version—my hair times a thousand and saying, I feel free and wild and open! I'm coming into myself! The fact that it ricocheted off that, and people got it and that they felt that sense of representation and empowerment, it's great. It's definitely something I've been thinking about—its effect on everyone. I've been able to progress it. There's so many other ways to wear your hair and honor who you are.

When listening to your music, it takes you somewhere else. It's emotional. What do you feel is your mission as artists?
LG: We want to play shows that inspire people.
JH: I think our mission is to make everyone feel invited, accepted, loved and inspired. We don't have a bullet list of things we want to do. There are things we want to do, today and in general. But just the fact that we are able to travel around the country, play music, connect with people, and continue to have amazing opportunities... I think the goal of this is to keep making things that we're proud of. We want to keep pushing ourselves to grow and try to work things, overall, into a better place, in whatever way we can.



JILLIAN:
SWEATER, MILLY. GOLD TOP, DROME.PANTS, V FILES.
RING, JOANNA LAURA CONSTANTINE.
SHOES, ASOS.

LUCAS:
SUEDE TOP, NIFTY THRIFTY VINTAGE.
DENIM PANTS, THE KOOPLES.
SHOES, UNDERGROUND



'...MY HAIR TIMES A THOUSAND AND SAYING, I FEEL FREE AND WILD AND OPEN! I'M COMING INTO MYSELF!

ALUNAGEORGE

STORY / JAY LOYOLA

PHOTOS / DANIEL SCOTT

STYLING / LISA KATNIC

MAKEUP / MARYGENE

HAIR / ANDRES COPELAND

SHOT @ THE WELL

SPECIAL THANKS TO KRISTY BENJAMIN AND SPENCER KOHN

Although Drake, Calvin Harris and Rihanna are top contenders for the coveted title of 2016's best summer anthem ("One Dance" and "This Is What You Came For," respectively) there's one banger that most definitely deserves a spot on that much-lauded list: "I'm In Control" by English dance-pop duo AlunaGeorge. Over a summer filled with moody slow jams, this electro-Caribbean dance cut featuring Jamaican dancehall artist Popcaan came in, as Miley might say, like a wrecking ball. Even if you never heard of the AlunaGeorge before, chances are you've heard the song.

Now, with the release of their brand new album *I Remember*, we talk to one-half of the duo, Aluna Francis, about their hit summer smash, touring with Sia and the emotional meaning behind the album title.

The album's title track was co-produced with Flume. How did that collaboration begin?

Me and George [Reed] wrote the song before we sent it to Flume to do some extra production on it. But we worked in the studio previously quite a number of times, so we got to know each other very well. I felt like I could trust him to do the right thing with my voice and with the track.

***I Remember* is such a beautiful, intimate ballad. Was it written from personal experience?**

In my past there have definitely been people that I think I'm completely over and I'm looking around, feeling pretty pleased with myself, thinking yeah, I've moved on [and] oh, I haven't thought about that guy in ages, I'm so well adjusted now... But then, I'll bump into that person and literally be flooded in memories—not back to square one, but not as strongly detached as I thought I was. And then, you know, I realized that maybe you never really leave people behind. It's a little bit about that.

***I Remember* is also a very nostalgic title for an album. Is there a secondary meaning behind those words?**

I pulled together some inspiration from the idea of remembering some older songs and [how] they're born from the need to remember something at the time; and for me, I can be in a situation where my mind goes blank and I forget to have strength or power or control over myself and my own mind, to what I want and what I think and what I can do. And so some of the songs I wrote were with the hope that I might remember next time, having, you know, written a whole song about it! Also singing "I'm in Control..." The power of having a really good mantra like that can really get you through a situation.

How would you describe the sound of the new record? Is it more in line with the electro R&B groove of *I Remember* or on the dancehall side of "I'm In Control"?"

There are one or two tracks that have more of the vibe of *I'm in Control* but what me and George always do on an album is create something that has a lot of different aspects to it. We don't like to just make an album where all of the songs are made to sound a little bit similar to the most popular songs, sort of like a repetition of the same thing that was successful [before]. So every song has its own vibe and has its own place in the album. It's really quite varied. We've always been like that; we're not very contrived in the way that we build an album because it kinda feels like we're restricting our creative expression by saying, right, all these songs have to fit in this theme and this sound. The AlunaGeorge sound does come quite naturally anyway without us putting restrictions on ourselves.

What would you say is the difference between your debut, *Body Music*, and the new album?

I think that sonically, if I do get a chance to listen to them side by side I'd imagine that this album has a more ambitious sound. We've been a little bit freer with the variety of moods that we've allowed to go in with the album without upsetting people. [Laughs] So yeah, a little bit more ambitious. Also, some of these stories that I'm telling on this album are much, more personal to me.

Some artists in the past have said that a sophomore album can be as equally, or perhaps even more important than their first record. Have you found yourselves pressured to match the success of your debut album?

Well it's funny because I think as an artist you can be quite pessimistic and negative in looking at your own "successes." So there is a definite pressure for this second album to be better. I think that's very natural to think that; as you go through life, you do things better and better, not the same or worse. I don't think that's anything special but I also don't personally think that our debut album was designed to be some kind of huge success. We were trying to create something new, maybe slightly ahead of its time so we made peace with the fact that we were doing something that people didn't really understand that well, and that it wouldn't be immediately digested by the mainstream market. And we were happy with that because we wanted to make what we wanted to make, and now I think on the second album that style of music isn't so weird to everyone, which is really nice. We get to pretty much do the same thing that we're doing, just developed things a bit further because we've always had a desire to create a timeless classic pop song.

Other than Flume, will the new record contain any more collaborations?

Yes, it will. We have been writing with some really cool up-and-coming artists: Dreezy, Leikeli47, Pell and then obviously with Flume, Zhu, and Popcaan that you know about already.

Will Diplo and/or Skrillex make any guest appearances on the album?

We did work on some tracks but we didn't finish them. We didn't have the time to get them on this album. They may come out at some point, though.



DRESS, JEREMY SCOTT.
SHOES, VINTAGE.

Along with Miguel, you're supporting Sia in her Nostalgic For the Present Tour. How did this massive gig came about?

Katy Perry put on a really fun party during the Grammys and it was for artists only, so everyone there was really relaxed and friendly. We both performed—I performed and Sia performed—so we got to meet. I think she liked that fact that she could see me singing along to "Chandelier!" I felt very honored to be allowed to support her on tour because it's actually kind of quite rare that women allow other women to be their support act. From what I've experienced myself; I've never been offered to support on tour for a woman other than Katy or Sia, so that was just really exciting. Every night is just going to be wild. I think Sia and Miquel and us, we work really hard on our lyrics and our songwriting so it should be a night for the songs.

When you're on tour how do you balance work and having a personal life?

One of the things I do is I make sure that my team is made up of people that if we weren't working together we would hang-out with. Everyone really, really gets along very well and loves each other. There's not so much a divide between feeling like I'm at work and feeling like I'm hanging out with friends, so it actually really helps.

Did you always have musical inclinations while growing up?

It was definitely a feature, but I didn't really think of singing as something you can do as career. It was just too far-fetched I think, until my mum suggested it! She can't even remember this now but she would say, while I was on my way to get a job at a supermarket, "Do you actually wanna work at a supermarket?" And I would say no. "So what do you wanna do?" And I was like, I wanna do music. She would say, "Well, why don't you go do it?" I took her deadly serious and got to work straight away. She regretted it for a good long time cause, you know, I was home and then away and stuff.

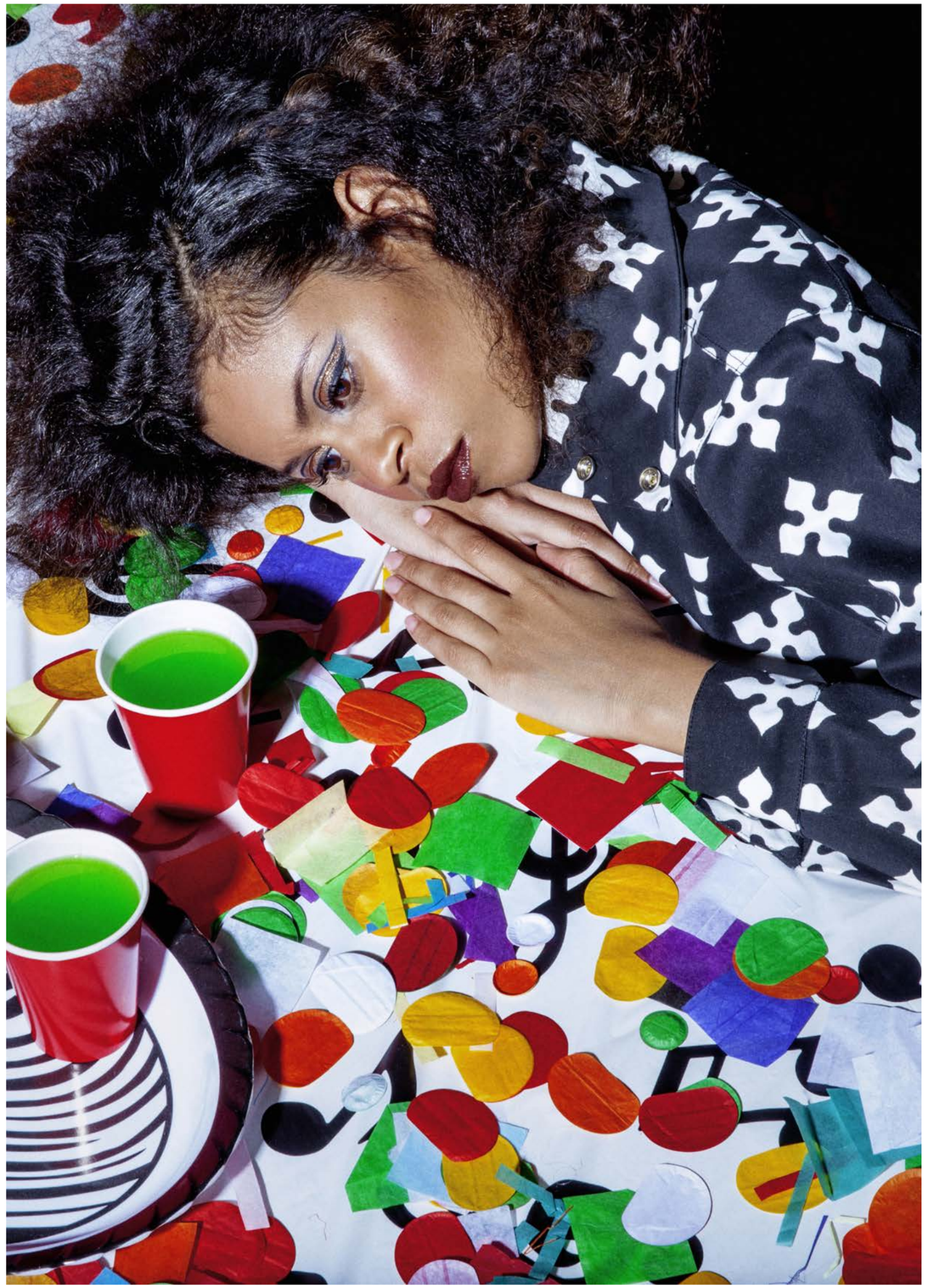
So your mom was a big supporter of your career in music?

Absolutely. I think she's a free spirit inside of the body of a mother and somebody who's worked to lift up her child. I think those elements tend to make parents forget how free spirited they actually are but they transfer that into their children and [then they] wonder why their children are wandering off trying to be musicians!

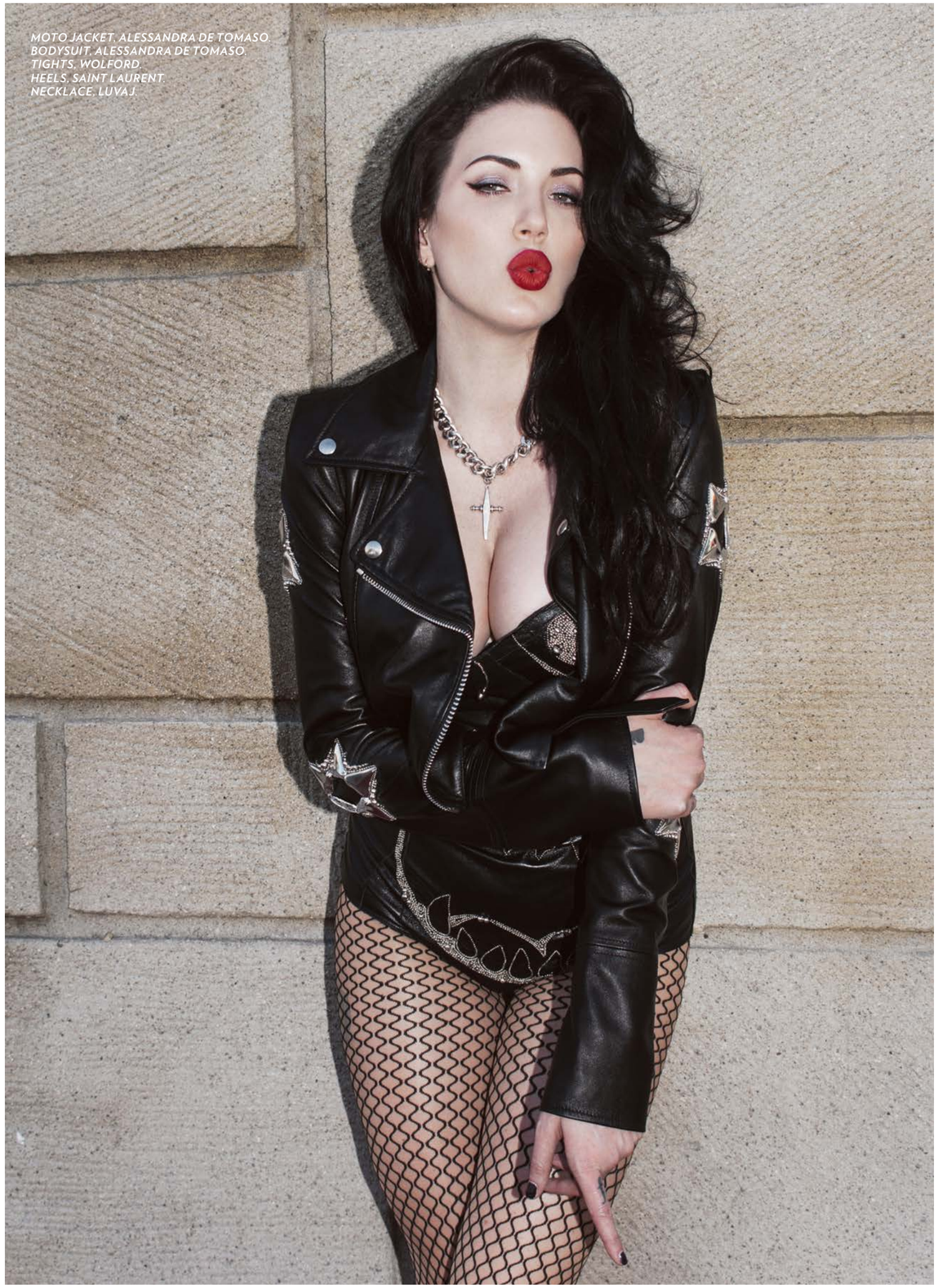
What would you like your fans to know about the new album?

I think that lyrically, this is really for them. I try to take some of my experiences and create songs that [reflect experiences] other people have been through. Maybe in some type of reflective way or in times of a breakup, these songs will become a part of [their] lives.

TANK TOP AND SHORTS ,CAMP COLLECTION.



BLACK AND WHITE JACKET, EXPERTS DISAGREE.



MOTO JACKET. ALESSANDRA DE TOMASO.
BODYSUIT. ALESSANDRA DE TOMASO.
TIGHTS. WOLFORD.
HEELS. SAINT LAURENT.
NECKLACE. LUVAJ.

DOROTHY

STORY / KOKO NTUEN
PHOTOS / DANIELLE DEFOE
STYLING / MECCA COX @THE ONLY AGENCY
MAKEUP / NATHAN HEJL @ ATELIER
HAIR / SIENREE

When it comes to the rock n' roll myth of destruction, hellraising and heavy riffs, Dorothy Martin, with her jet black hair, raspy voice and turbulent stage presence, seems like the proper muse. Her voice, a whiskey-infused siren's call, is reminiscent of the rawness of some of the greats: Guns N' Roses, The Rolling Stones and Eartha Kitt, even. Her namesake band, DOROTHY, is comprised of drummer Dylan Howard, guitarist DJ Black and bassist Gregg Cash. Their debut album, *ROCKISDEAD*—a collection of dynamic, heavy-hitting songs—kicked down the door to the Billboard Rock Chart with its mind-bending rock melodies. Whether at one of their live shows or at home, with the stereo turned up to maximum volume, the record will make your body twist and turn; wherever you are, DOROTHY's music will rattle every bone in your spine.

Dorothy's arena-primed voice has been a major instrument for the band and an astounding addition to the music industry, catalyzing a rebellion against the current landscape of Top 40 pop and Ibiza DJs—music which can sometimes feel stale and boring and uninspired with its repetitive pentatonic riffs.

"When I'm listening to a lot of stuff [like that], it makes me feel a little dumb," Dorothy admits. "There's not much energy, movement; not really much going on. So my thing is, if it makes you feel something—that's the spirit of rock n' roll. It's like that punk mentality of, 'Fuck everything! We're gonna break out of a box! We're not gonna sound like the last guy. We're not gonna speak like the last guy. We're not gonna look like the last guy. We're gonna do what feels right to us.' That, I think, speaks to everybody, especially the youth of America. They can feel that oppressive control of society."

Her energy and dedication to making real music that speaks to real people has been an asset to both her fans and herself. Six years ago, Dorothy was struggling with relationships, addiction, and she didn't know where she was going to live. Through music she overcame her obstacles and was soon signed to Roc Nation when her manager, George, showed the label her band's DIY video for "After Midnight." Rihanna, of all people, quickly took interest.

"It turned into [this thing of], 'Let's give her a publishing deal and they can write together.' Rihanna ended up saying, 'No, I feel like that is a DOROTHY song.' She really respected the artist-song relationship," Dorothy reveals. "Her project turned out to be Anti. Then I met her manager and it turned into me becoming a Roc Nation artist."

ROCKISDEAD commands listeners to "Get Up" and "Raise Hell," literally. The band's music comes with a call to action which is expressed in such a raw way it's impossible to not get pulled in. "I have a lot of unbridled energy that I get to channel into the music," the songwriter says. "I just always go by how I feel. And I can tell when the music's not right. It's really, really satisfying to express yourself. I kind of impart that to bands at shows: always, always feel like you can express yourself. You have to. Don't do something that's killing you on the inside. Your life is too short.... You wanna be able to make a difference and help people, inspire each other. That's why we're here, right? This, to me, is such a blessing to be able to do. I'm so glad that the album turned out the way it did [and] I'm excited to see where it goes, how we evolve."

Dorothy continues, "My thing is right from the heart. There's a quote on that show, Vinyl, where the guitar player says something like, 'Just write what you feel, boys, it's not rocket science. It's not magic.' And it's true. I would second guess myself plenty and now I don't. I know when it's something emotional and real and coming from a place that's special. And I know when we're overthinking it and forcing it. There's a difference: That inspired flow of energy and creativity is very obvious. The more you do it, the better you get at it and the more you recognize where it's coming from."

DOROTHY's debut album is a loud and almost violent introduction to the band, but they do leave room for some surprising, tender moments, like the sincere ballad, "Shelter," a song that brought me to tears the first time I listened to it.

"Actually, 'Shelter' made me cry too," the singer admits. "When we were recording it, my best friend Grace came over. It was very difficult for me. Mark hadn't shown up to the studio that day. It was just me and Ian Scott, the producer. My father had passed away...I don't dwell on it, but for some reason, that song really hit home for me. When we were recording, I was drinking at the time, so Grace brought me a bottle of Jameson. I was like, 'I can't do this sober. I have too many feelings.' We actually got the song done in practically one take! It was one of those magical moments. The first couple takes we were just warming up or whatever, and then Ian pressed record and it was one of those moments where it was completely real. I think that's why it makes you cry. It makes a lot of people cry...It's something that music is lacking these days."

From a young age, Dorothy used her vocals as a way to break through society and find herself. Her honest approach to songwriting and strong, Olympian-like discipline have helped hone the powerhouse vocals that she possesses today.

"I took it upon myself to find different teachers and study as much as I could," she says. "I went to the Musician's Institute for Vocal Performance for summer camp. It was so expensive at the time, I couldn't afford a full year-long course, so I took their summer boot camp. I basically sought out as many different teachers as I could and tried to learn from each one. For the most part I'm self-taught [from] just listening and realizing that it's like, you're an athlete. It's like going to the gym every morning. The more you do it, the stronger you get. It's not like, 'It's not fair! How does he do that?' Well, because he worked on it. You have to train yourself."

When she first started singing in front of people, she admits she was her own worst critic. The Dorothy we see onstage today—stomping about, rolling her shoulders like a seductive minx, mouth practically devouring the microphone—is a result of years of playing live and figuring it out on the go.

"I used to be really shy. I wasn't sure of myself, so it was a learning experience. The more shows we played and the more experiences we had, the more I grew as a performer. It's not super rehearsed. We'll rehearse the song, but I don't necessarily rehearse what I'm gonna say. It's not like I wear the same outfit every single day on tour. There's a lot of very 'rehearsed-ness' that goes into performance a lot of the time, but I feel like we're very loose. It's scary but it makes it dangerous, which makes it fun. There's a lot of room for error, but there's a lot of freedom in it."



FUR CAPE. MSGM. BLOUSE. THOMAS WYLDE PANTS. THOMAS WYLDE BELT. LUVAJ.



DRESS, MSGM. HAT, GLADYS TAMEZ. SHOES, SAINT LAURENT.
SILVER BRACELETS AND NECKLACE, LUVAJ.
CHOKER, LILLIAN SHALOM

"Here's the thing: the crowd is an equal component to the performance," she continues. "They can either suck the energy out of you or they can circulate it back and it becomes this amazing dance. It's just so much fun. We feed off each other. When crowds get really riled up, you see them crowd surfing or moshing or rioting, that's when that energy is being circulated back around to the artist. You kind of become one crazy monster."

Today, DOROTHY's shows are full of riotous performances that stir up nostalgia for the early days of '90s grunge.

"Lzzy Hale said it the best: We just plug in and play. There's no antics, no tricks," she explains. "We don't use any tracks. Not to say that tracks are bad, we might use or play around with them. But we just wanna plug in and play. The last wave of music that had this type of raw energy was the '90s. Nirvana is one that stands out in my mind a lot. They plugged in and they played—it was very real."

Of her other inspirations, she mentions that her vinyl collection contains everything from Janis Joplin to Pink Floyd to Led Zeppelin to Bob Dylan and, of course, Michael Jackson.

"He was such a beautiful man," she gushes about the late music icon. "But If I could liken myself to anybody, it would be Steven Tyler. You can just tell that he feels one hundred percent free. It's beautiful. It's like watching an angel sing. Like, holy shit! The energy he brought to it! You can be really good and hit all the notes and be like, 'Look at me, I'm a diva…' You can do all the runs and it doesn't matter. The way he sings… that's beautiful. I don't care if I fuck up. As long as the energy's there, I'm good."

Music aside, Dorothy's Angelina Jolie-like face and sexy style have made an immediate mark on a business where women's bodies can be as big of a commodity as their albums. After all, sex sells—but for Dorothy, the only product she offers up for sale is her music. "When someone says you're beautiful, you say thank you. I appreciate it," she says. "But if I was only selling sex with no substance behind it, there would be an issue. I don't allow myself to feel objectified and I don't allow people to objectify me. I used to. I have had some… experiences that stand out in my mind, and the realization that I got from them was, 'Wow, we're really conditioned to feel inferior to men.' We've been conditioned to the point where we don't even know we're conditioned by men and the media…"

"Women are powerful," Dorothy adds. "Women are very powerful. We bring life into the world. We're extremely emotional and intuitive. I'm extremely sensitive to energy to the point where sometimes, it gets me in trouble. It can make me sick."

Dorothy's feminist mission is helping break through the ceiling of a slowly-crumbling misogynistic society, and she is doing her part by making music sans barriers.

"You know how afraid people are of breaking the rules? And how sad that is?" she asks. "It's literally invisible red tape that doesn't exist. Maybe it's a rule or a superstition passed down from generation to generation to keep you in check, to keep you in line so you behave and so you're easier to control. It's ridiculous. Telling your child they can't be a musician because that's not a real job? That's an example of that. It is a real job."

Dorothy pauses before continuing with her mission statement: "I just want people to follow their dreams. What they really, really want to do. What is burning inside you? What do you really want to do? If you wanna bake pies and open a pie shop for a living, but your mom wants you to be a dentist, fuck that. Bake pies. You're gonna be in business anyway."

COURTNEY BARNETT

PHOTOS / KRISTY BENJAMIN
STORY / TIFFANY DIANE TSO



Courtney Barnett songs are instantly recognizable. If you have never heard a Courtney Barnett song before, you can still differentiate her sound and lyricism from anything you have heard before. The Australian singer-songwriter's style is often described as "deadpan" and "rambling": The content of her songs sounds like a stream of consciousness in the midst of an existential crisis spilling out to a melody. Truthfully, these thoughts have been organized and reorganized, written and rewritten.

This is all part of Barnett's process. "My brain thinks that if I write out a song neater than it was written out before, it will become more complete, like it will write itself," she ruminates during our interview. A peek into this songwriter's archives will reveal notebooks full of versions of the same song, handwritten, typed up and printed out. "Sometimes it actually does [work]," she tries to explain of her workflow, adding, "I think that the neatness... it's some kind of visual trick."

Her next album is currently in this stage—notebooks and scraps of paper. Unswayed by large corporate labels nor the desire to become a product of the music industry, she is not giving herself a deadline for her next release, casually stating she "could take the next 60 years" if she has to. Barnett's debut album *Sometimes I Sit and Think, and Sometimes I Just Sit* was released in March 2015 and received high accolades, including eight 2015 ARIA Music Awards nominations resulting in four wins—one of which was Best Cover Artist for her self-illustrated cover art.

The 28-year-old rocker's releases are usually rife with the artist's doodles and handwriting, something which make us feel more intimately connected to Barnett's personhood, as if her songs did not already reveal an inner monologue. For example, "Pedestrian at Best" seems to rattle off a Gen Y's internal dialogue, selfish and nihilistic thoughts filled with self-resentment: "I've got no idea how I even got here / I'm resentful I'm having an existential time crisis / what bliss, daylight savings won't fix this mess / Underworked and oversexed, I must express my disinterest."

Most notably a musician, Barnett makes books of drawings and poetry in her spare time, something she has always done. "Growing up, I was the biggest book nerd. I spent everyday at the library after school... Hopefully someday, I'll make a book of poetry or something. It would be pretty nice," she admits. "Secretly, I think I've always wanted to publish things, ever since I was a kid."

Overcoming mental roadblocks seems to be very much within the introverted Aussie's modus operandi. Playing music as a frontwoman was not originally in Barnett's sights, which included only playing guitar and accompanying her musician friends who would sing. "I started singing in my room, when I started playing guitar," she tells me.

Now a Grammy-nominated artist, Barnett only had herself to battle in order to flip the switch. "I just thought I was no good, and I was terrified to sing in front of people," she remembers. "I was always writing. Then, I just somehow found a tiny little speck of confidence; that's all it took."

At 18, she began playing and singing her own songs for the public. A friend of hers who was also a singer-songwriter signed her up for an open mic after Barnett confided that she also wrote music. Most of her other friends didn't know at the time.

After the first open mic, which she describes as "soul-crushing," followed more open mics and gigs the musician would book herself. "I basically called up every venue and got a gig wherever they would take me. I organized a tour once. I rang a fish and chips shop, and I played out in front of that, and I considered that a gig, even though it was technically busking."

Busking is also old hat for Barnett, who says she did a lot of busking in Hobart, but never as herself/solo. "Busking is actually quite fun," she remembers. She would play guitar with a friend who would sing and reportedly made $100 on their first day, something she considered "heaps" of money back then.

Between touring, writing and recording her own music, as well as running her own independent record label, Milk!, the artist still finds time to play guitar for other people, namely her longtime girlfriend Jen Cloher's band. At the time of our interview, she is gearing up to record with Cloher in a barn out in the country for a week. "I actually really like playing in this band, because I just play guitar..." Barnett explains. "When I'm playing my own music, I'm focusing on so much, expelling so much energy. Every breath is filled with something, so it's kind of tiring."

Barnett's efforts have paid off handsomely, with multiple honors in the past year, including playing Saturday Night Live, The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon, and being included on President Obama's Summer Playlist. "I got home from rehearsal and saw it on my computer, on my phone actually... I just thought it was funny and great." When I ask Barnett whether or not she could imagine the U.S. president listening to her album, she responds with humble confidence: "I mean, why not? I'm just glad it's him and not Donald Trump," she jokes. "If Donald Trump had picked one of my songs, that would be really depressing."

Barnett tends to find the humor in things. The contents of her songs tend to feel like daily observations viewed through the lens of hilarious neuroticism. On "Dead Fox," she sings, "Jen insists that we buy organic vegetables and I must admit that I was a little skeptical at first / A little pesticide can't hurt? / Never having too much money I get the cheap stuff at the supermarket / But they're all pumped up with shit / A friend told me that they stick nicotine in the apples."

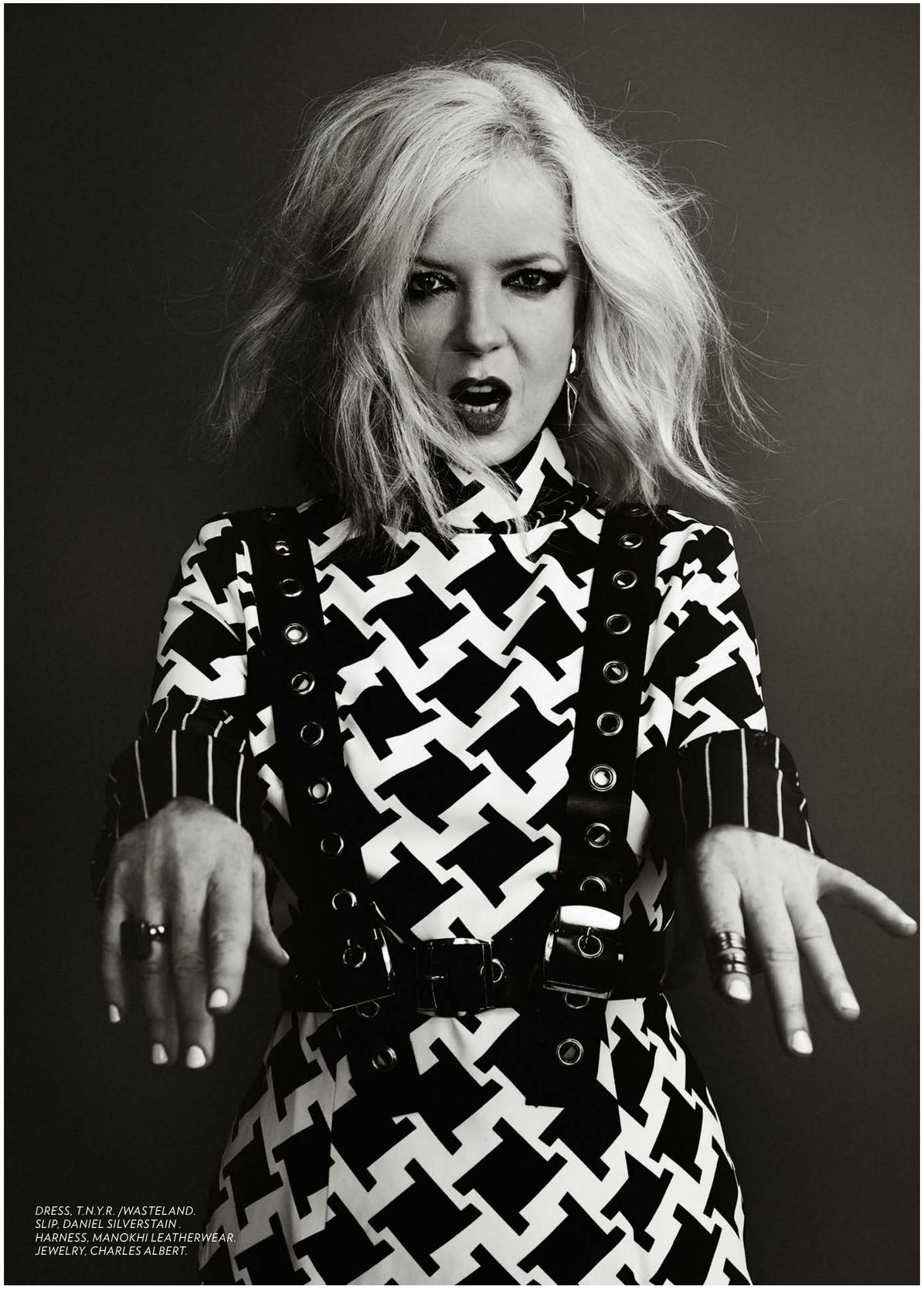
When it comes to the inspiration behind her music, her songs come from a truthful place, expressing things that she may have trouble expressing normally. "I think a lot of my songs are for other people," she tells me. "When my friends are going through things... I wish I could express my feelings toward them, but I put it in a song instead. To sound real, which it is, I insert myself into the story." That is what makes her music relatable—her undeniably consistent perspective, though Barnett urges that her songs do not focus too strongly on any single subject matter. "One thought gets aggravated and goes off onto some other emotion, so it becomes this bigger thing. I don't think any of my songs are about one thing, because I get too sidetracked," the songwriter says.

I ask her if she ever plans to write from a fictional place. "I think eventually I'll probably muck around with turning the table a bit more," Barnett muses. "It is fun, it's a different kind of writing challenge, to put yourself inside a different head, but still make it have that power of feeling real." I have no doubt that we will see an expansion in Barnett's writing, both in song and other forms of literature.

After all, it would only take one "tiny little speck of confidence." That's all.







DRESS, T.N.Y.R. /WASTELAND.
SLIP, DANIEL SILVERSTAIN .
HARNESS, MANOKHI LEATHERWEAR.
JEWELRY, CHARLES ALBERT.

SHIRLEY MANSON

STORY / ALYSSA HARDY PHOTOS / KATHRYNA HANCOCK STYLING / CANDICE LAMBERT MAKEUP / JEFFREY BAUM HAIR / NIKKI PROVIDENCE

In an era where '90s nostalgia has reached new heights, the true culture of the decade often gets lost in a sea of flannels, chokers and "What Kids These Days Don't Get" listicles. Of course, a resurgence is natural as fashion trends cycle around and the aging youth begins to long for their past, but the Internet has transformed a decade full of culture-shifting discoveries into something you can purchase online. Enter Shirley Manson: the iconic singer of infamous '90s grunge rock group, Garbage. Now 50 years old, the pink-haired frontwoman has reemerged with a new album in tow, one which reintroduces the true spirit of the time.

"I do think there is a lot of love for the generation—my generation—who emerged in the '90s at a time when the alternative culture was really dominating the extreme culture," she tells me over the phone, a hint of amusement in her voice.

As Garbage sets out on tour with their record, *Strange Little Birds*, they've realized that their fan-base, present company included, has not only remained loyal, but has grown. "We enjoyed a No. 1 rock record with this album, and that literally feels like a miracle. Particularly for a woman of my age—and I could count on my digits how many women have been able to do that—it's really unusual," Manson shares. "It's very difficult to hold onto an audience these days because there's always something new to listen to, there's always someone new to fall in love with."

As she looked out into the faces of the crowds who attended her west coast tour this past year, the singer saw something she didn't expect: young people.

"I think that's one of the things that has struck us the most on this tour is, all of a sudden, there's a whole new generation of very young women competing at the front of the gates. You don't want to be stuck in your own world. You always want to be stretching a hand out across a dark sea and hope that you can connect with a new ear, a fresh ear, of people who put perspective to the field across generations and, again, that's really powerful and inspiring," she shares.

As you can tell from her particular penchant toward the women in her audience, Manson is famously feminist in an unapologetic, no-holds-barred way. Recently, she made a shocking revelation to Billboard about her experience with sexual assault at age 14, something which has certainly framed the way she looks at our patriarchal society.

Her new fan-base has given her a renewed responsibility towards speaking her mind about it: "As I have gotten older and older, 've become more and more passionate about women and their role in our culture. I realize how we have allowed ourselves to be disempowered and disengaged. And I have also noticed, as I've gotten older myself, so many of my peers give up because they're no longer seen as a sex symbol or a sex object."

Since the beginning of her career, Manson has fought against the idea that sexuality is a commodity, especially when it overshadows talent. It's a theme that has come through her music and her performances since 1995. She explains, "I think a lot of people just want to be famous, or they want to entertain, but I think there is a real opportunity for musicians who are interested in being [a part of the] counterculture. My focus is usually on young women artists because that's who I'm invested in, but I think it goes for male artists too."

She advises women in entertainment to be themselves and not succumb to the pressures of the pop world. "If you continue to play the traditional game, you'll drown," Manson muses. "Every woman seems to be interested in only being perceived as pretty, or only being perceived as popular, and until women reject that notion, they'll continue to be part of a lineage of women who only get five minutes of fame."

As a 20-something woman that only knows the '90s through watching my older sister over-tweeze her eyebrows, the underexposed time before the Internet and selfies is lost on me. I can't help but think that not caring about "being pretty" is a great concept, but unbelievably difficult in practice. I also can't imagine what someone in the spotlight must feel, particularly as they grow older.

"I didn't say it was easy," she tells me. "It's painful and it's depressing and you feel rejected, and dejected. Interestingly enough, a lot of people on our social media platform who criticize my appearance are mostly women. 99.9 percent of any negative criticism I endure comes from other women."

Whether it's feminism, music or culture, Manson's perspective is one of an outsider. While our conversation occurs prior to Kim Kardashian's now-infamous Paris robbery, Manson brings up something surprisingly relevant about pop culture, glamorization and the responsibility that many people struggle with, just as our collective news-feeds flood with information on the unfortunate incident.

"I really am at odd with popular culture for the most part," the artist claims. "When I see people on social media boasting about their fur coat, or their fast cars, or all the money they have in the bank, I genuinely feel repulsed. I have traveled to India and I see children living on top of garbage, with no parents around and they're working at the age of four years old. I understand that there are women in the Middle East that are forced to stay inside during the daylight hours so that they are not considered indecent, and I know that there are young women in Africa that are forced to endure genital mutilation. I know there are so many people who are so unlucky in this life."

DRESS, FENDI. TIGHTS, WOLFORD.
JEWELRY, CHARLES ALBERT.
CHOKER, TOPSHOP.

Thus, Manson's return couldn't have come at a better moment. We are living in a time that is so inundated with escapism that it seems like we've lost touch with reality. Even celebrities who are "totally themselves" often have an air of being contrived. Garbage's frontwoman, however, has remained steadfast in her convictions.

"I was viewed as a sex symbol and I fought against it, I didn't take my clothes off," she recalls of her early days in the business. "I was asked to pose for Playboy and Penthouse and I rejected it, and I rejected the money involved that I had been offered. I just refused to allow myself, through my own vanity, to be lured into a cage. Because a woman's sexuality is the most important power in the entire universe." Arguably, posing for a sexy magazine shoot or taking your clothes off can be seen as powerful for many women, but Manson's point is valid and personal. In fact, speaking up against the pressures of society without being prompted by a slew of online comments is almost revolutionary.

For fans of Garbage, old and new, both Manson and her band's most recent record are refreshing additions to the current state of music. "When I was younger, I just really wanted to make a noise show," the singer tells me. "But as I have gotten older and I realized I have the ability to make people feel better, once I sort of figured that out, it's become a great pleasure and joy to get up onstage and really work at putting joy onto other people's faces, and when I see that happen, that fills me up in ways that I have been unable to fill myself up with any other sort of walk of life."

As a whole, Manson's return to the stage is a power move for women, for rock n' roll, and for an ageist society. She wants to make people uncomfortable and give them an alternative way of thinking, the same way she did in the decade that gave her a voice. With this attitude, she has found her true strength.

"I think my power comes from striving to be a good artist, a truthful artist," she says. "I've never been one who wants to be told I look pretty. I want to look powerful."

DRESS, SHUSHU/TONG.
JEWELRY, CHARLES ALBERT AND J.SOUTHERN

BROOKE CANDY

STORY / MATHIAS ROSENZWEIG

PHOTOS / BENJO ARWAS

STYLING / MATTHEW HENSLEY

MAKEUP / ANTHONY NGUYEN

HAIR / GREGORY RUSSELL

NAILS / NATALIE MINERVA @ NAIL SWAG

CREATIVE DIRECTION / ERICA RUSSELL

DRESS, MING LEE. SHOES, THOM SOLO.



RUCHED SHRUG AND PANTS, THE BLONDS. GLITTER PASTIES, PASTEASE.

Brooke Candy knows that empowerment takes time. While she was working her way to become a subversive cultural icon, her personal life was spiraling into a self-declared “grave” of drug use and depression. Her feminist, in-your-face grit won Candy a spot on too many mood boards to count: the larger-than-life blue braids and metallic ensembles, all held up by massive platform shoes, were unlike anything the world had seen, and it was sensational. But it wasn’t until she got herself sober, with help from friends like Sia, that she found the clarity and self-empowerment she needed to hone her craft. Since then, she’s better than ever.

Her 2016 single “Paper or Plastic” showed an entirely new side of Candy, whose chameleon-like ability to adapt and change feels like Madonna on speed. Despite being notorious for several years, the artist is just now preparing to release her debut album. Produced by Sia, it’s a particular brand of pop that sits comfortably on the border of Top 40 music and dissident art. Catching up with Candy over the phone as she made her way out of The Grove in Los Angeles, we discussed her new album, getting her life together, and why she wants to be an artist for the people.

I saw you nearly half a decade ago performing at Santos Party House in New York. What’s changed in your life since then?
I think I was living in Los Angeles, but I was [basically] homeless. I was sleeping under my car and on people’s couches. I was hustling like a motherfucker. I was stripping. I was living this very intense but also quite magical life. And then I kind of got super heavy into drugs and it became a bit more hedonistic and a bit darker. Over the past year, I’ve gotten off drugs, and found myself again. I feel like the past two or three years, I just lost myself. I had no artistic identity. I was sad. I was asleep. I wasn’t able to feel grateful for things. Over the past year, with just a lot of meditation and a healthier lifestyle, I’m not in that headspace anymore. I feel like I’m finally finding myself again as an artist, and I’m really confident in it. I’m much more clear and really grateful to be alive.

Despite it being a hard time, it sounds like you were able to feel things really intensely, which is probably why you became an artist.
That’s 100 percent accurate. Up until this point now—now I’m making art because I just fucking love it. I could be so happy either way. Now I just do it because it’s fun. There was definitely a time in my life where it was absolutely necessary because if I didn’t do it, I would have killed myself. That’s so dark, but I have to laugh at it. Because it’s so fucking crazy! I have a lot of creative energy and my entire life, it was really hard to channel, because I didn’t have anyone teach me how to channel it. I didn’t have a creative outlet growing up, so once I discovered that, it became a savior for me because yeah, it was quite sad.

Isn’t it weird how all of a sudden, your outlook on life and what makes you happy changes?
Often times we can’t control it. I would say that a lot of my decision-making and my outlook on life was based on how I was raised. I was programmed to see things in a very specific way. I took everything so much more seriously, and now I’ve broken free from that and my eyes are open. Nothing should be taken seriously; life is an illusion, and this is so weird. Let’s just have fun, spread love, have sex and do whatever.

What does the new album sound like?
My album sounds like “pure pop.” There’s a little bit of everything, but it’s definitely 100 percent pop music… A few songs have a sad undertone and there are even one or two with a solid Cher vibe. I’m hoping that I can create another EP or two to release between now and my album cycle, [which would allow] me to take it back to basics and do what I’m best at, which is straight up rap…I feel like I I need to give my hardcore fans a taste of the old sound every once in a while to keep the fire alive.

You’re always super involved in your visuals as well as the music. Can you tell me about having creative control?
I’m getting to a place where I want to have creative control over the music, I want to have creative control over the video, I want to do it all. I want it to be a 100 percent honest representation of who I am as an artist. When I was really depressed and in heavy darkness, I did care, but now I don’t. I want everything that I put out to be just honest. For me, to do that, I have a creative partner. His name’s Seth Pratt. We’ve made my favorite work together. We have this really fluid, creative energy that goes between us that I’ve never experienced with another human being. He and I did “Paper or Plastic”.

Was there ever a time when you felt you didn’t have creative control?
The “Opulence” era was definitely not a proper representation of who I am. I was on a lot of drugs at the time and wasn’t able to take the reigns when it came to making my art. The art I produced during that time was a combination of drug psychosis and other people’s visions. I was more of a vehicle than a voice. Now I’m much more confident in my vision and am ready to make my voice heard!

Sia helped to produce this album in a major way. How did that come about?
We met over the Internet. She found me on Instagram. She emailed me. I had no idea who she was. She was like, “Hi, my name is Sia. I want to write a pop song for you. Will you meet me at this café?” I didn’t really know who she was, and I didn’t believe it. I thought it was this girl who was online bullying me, which sounds so funny. I emailed her back and was like, “Hey, don’t email me again. Fuck you.” She emailed me again and was like, “Hey, no, it’s really me.” So I went and met her at this café. I sat down with her and we talked and then she was like, “Fuck a song! I’m going to do your album. I’m going to find some management, and you’re gonna kill it.” And then beyond all those things, which are so great, she also helped me get off of drugs. To me, that was the most magical thing that’s ever happened in my life. It was so hard to get out of that fucking hole. That hole was a grave, and she pulled me out of it. I owe her my life forever because of that.

At the end of the day, makes you feel happiest?
I wrote a wish-list the other day. I do want a lot of things, but I’m not willing to do anything dirty or depressing to get them. If they come to me, it’s meant to be. And I’ll work really hard. But if they don’t come to me, that’s fine too. I’ll still find ways to enjoy life. But my dream, I really want to live on a farm, near the beach, with some friends—almost like a commune. I just want to be able to make art in all forms. I want to be able to paint, I want to be able to direct videos, I want to be able to make music and just do it all, at my discretion. I want a life where I don’t have to think about money and I can just chill by the beach and make art. Anyone who’s supporting anyone that I love, I want them to help. If my album doesn’t do well, who fucking cares? It’s cool that I still got to make an album. That’s pretty weird, you know?

CATSUIT, ON AURA TOUT VU.
CHOKER, BJORN VAN DEN BERG.

OPPOSITE PAGE: DRESS, THE BLONDS.

POM POM BOA, GEORGINE. LATEX PASTIES AND PANTIES, JANE DOE LATEX. GLOVES, ROMEO.

OPPOSITE PAGE:
SEQUIN BODYSUIT, CHENG. JULIENNE THIGH HIGH BOOTS, LODOVICO ZORDANAZZO.
RING, FIAT LUX.
EARRINGS, GLYNNETH B.





PERFUME

STORY / ERICA RUSSELL

PHOTOS / DANIELA TRUJILLO EVB

STYLING / TOSHIO TAKEDA

MAKEUP / MASAKO OSUGA

HAIR / YUKI SHIMAJIRI

RETOUCHING / LAUREN NAKAO WINN

SHOT @ SHOTO STUDIO, TOKYO

PRODUCTION / KOKO NTUEN

A-CHAN (RIGHT) SHIRT, SKIRT, BELT, ARM COVER, BOOT TOGA.
NOCCHI (CENTER) TOPS, JUMPSUIT, SHORT BOOTS: TOGA.
KASHIYUKA (LEFT)COAT, SHIRT, CAMISOLE, SKIRT, SHORT BOOTS: TOGA.

In person and up close, Perfume is exactly how I imagined them to be. Ethereally beautiful, effortlessly stylish and naturally playful, Nocchi (Ayano Omoto), A-chan (Ayaka Nishiwaki) and Kashiyuka (Yuka Kashino) are a delight when I sit to speak with them ahead of their sold-out New York City show at Hammerstein Ballroom, our conversation, language barrier be damned, touching upon everything from fashion to international fans.

Like BABYMETAL, Utada Hikaru and Kyary Pamyu Pamyu, Hiroshima-born, Tokyo-based Perfume is one of the few J-pop acts who have achieved an elite level of global success in Western music markets, their continually growing fanbase in the United States—who are just as frenzied and passionate as their native fans back home in Japan—a testament to this triumph. Unsurprisingly, it's when the trio is performing onstage in front of said fans, during their famously energetic and dance-oriented shows, that they feel most empowered.

"When I'm dancing, I have so much on my mind," Nocchi says through her translator, telling me that it's the audience's interaction that truly energizes her and her groupmates. "When I'm not sure about myself, I'll turn around and look at the smiling faces in the crowd, and around me, and in front of me and how excited they're getting."

When I ask about the difference between their American fans and their Japanese fans, the electro-pop group tells me that not only do the two fanbases seem to gravitate towards different songs, but their behaviors as audience members tend to reflect certain cultural hallmarks.

"Our American fans are very honest about their expressions and feelings. But Japanese people tend to be reserved and don't get excited as much, unless other people are getting excited around them, too," Kashiyuka explains. "So when we perform in front of a Japanese audience, it's the three of us versus everybody. But in America, it's the three of us versus individuals."

With their reach in the U.S. expanding exponentially with each glistening release, it's no wonder that the three performers are learning English: One of the most difficult things about breaking the international market outside of Japan has been, understandably, the language barrier. They share that they seem to understand more now than what they understood during their last U.S. tour, thanks to taking lessons. But they can't fully express their feelings and everything they want to say in English yet, something that has been frustrating. Despite everything, when they do feel connected with the fans, it makes them even more happy and encouraged.

While their devoted listeners may be what drive Nocchi, Kashiyuka and A-chan, it's their yuujou, their friendship, which is the glue that holds them together."We're friends, but what we have is a lot more than just that. It's more like family," A-chan says. "But also, at the same time, it's a working relationship as well. There are a lot of different things between us, but when we go out for dinners or when we're on flights together, it's more like friendship."

"It's so much fun," Nocchi adds. "What we've seen as we get older, we've all seen together. There's no need for words. We can look at each other and just start laughing about the same thing."

"I've never been on tour with anyone else. What if it's more fun to tour with someone else?" Kashiyuka quips, as the three friends begin to laugh.

A-CHAN (LEFT)
SHIRT: DSQUARED2
SKIRT: MSGM
SHOES: STYLIST OWN

NOCCHI (CENTER)
JACKET, SHIRT AND PANTS: DSQUARED2
SHOES: STYLIST OWN

KASHIYUKA (RIGHT)
COAT, SHIRT AND SKIRT: DSQUARED2
SHOES: STYLIST OWN

When I ask what has changed for them the most through the years, the group, which recently celebrated its 15th anniversary, laugh again and tell me their age, of course. "We never thought we would stay together this long! But we still laugh at the same stupid things every day."

In April 2016, the trio released *Cosmic Explorer*, their futuristic fifth studio album. A collection of twinkling, bright, synthed-out dance pop gems, the band shares that they decided not to name the album until all the songs were recorded. As fate would have it, the last track they laid down was called "Cosmic Explorer," and it instantly became the perfect capstone for a record brimming with expansive intergalactic beats and new sonic territories for the pop pioneers.

In my practiced Japanese, I tell them that my favorite song off the record is "Star Train," a joyful, throbbing slice of melodic electro-pop that I imagine could easily shoot to the Top 40 here in the U.S., if only mainstream American radio could loosen up on the language barrier.

As for Kashiyuka, her favorite track is "Baby Face": "All of our love songs used to be for someone who is older, or at least the same age, admiring someone. But this one is for a younger boy and the lyrics are really cute. It's fun to sing!" "I like 'Flash,'" Nocchi says. "If I perform it during a show, it uses up about 60 percent of my energy for the whole show—for just that one song." A-chan admits she likes the title track, "Cosmic Explorer," because "it's such a big song." She explains, "It talks about generations and generations of watching the sea. It's such a universal song. It's an unknown adventure—like our dream and motivation syncing together with the lyrics."

It's a universal narrative, indeed, much like the rest of the themes on the new album, something which listeners, regardless of nationality or language or age, can submit themselves to wholly. And so, it makes sense when I ask Perfume how they would like people to feel when they listen to the record, the J-pop group smiles and tells me, simply, "happy."

"We want people to dance to it," Nocchi says. "We want them to listen to it in the morning and be motivated for the rest of their day."

Ground control to cosmic explorers: Mission accomplished.



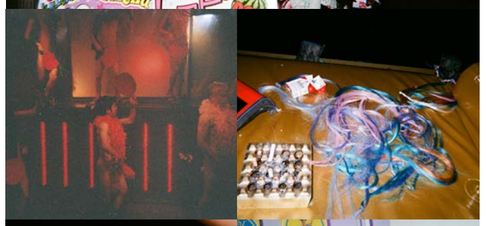
WANDERLUSTING: TOKYO

STREET STYLE:

photos / Koko Ntuen









CHLOE NØRGAARD <3'S TOKYO

interview / Koko Ntuen photos courtesy of Chloe Nørgaard

Chloe Nørgaard, one of our favorite wanderlusters, tells us about her love affair with Tokyo.

What was your first experience in Tokyo like?
I went there when I was 19 to build up my book for modeling. Turned out nobody was into me, so I ended up exploring and partying. One night Taka, the manager of New Lex, asked me if there was anything he could do since he was glad that I came there every night (which was mainly for the free dinner). I told him I would love to learn to DJ. He was totally into it and set me up with their resident DJ Yo, who taught me. It's pretty funny because he doesn't really speak English so it was more of a show and tell. I ended up DJing there every wednesday! I fell in love with Japan while I was there, and since then I have been back 6 or 7 times. I always feel like it's a bit like Narnia or Neverland, because for those who can't speak or read Japanese it's almost like you're in your own world. There's much to see, and I find new surprises every time. The city has so much to offer, from super tiny amazing restaurants in the middle of nowhere to Beatles cover bands that might even be better than the actual Beatles to cat ladies to epic shrines... It's like an adult Disneyland.

What is the fondest memory you have in Japan?
Taking the bullet train to Kyoto and going to the bamboo forest in Arashiyama. That place is indescribable. The energy and peace I feel there is nuts. I never want to leave, I just want to chill and take a nap, have a picnic, or something. It's magical.

Where is the best place to hear live music in Tokyo?
The Elvis impersonators in Harajuku are pretty epic.

Where is the best place to shop for socks and underthings?
Harajuku for sure, or Don Quixote!

What's your dream night out in the city?
Just being completely random and going to a ton of new places.

Which place has the best DJs?
Womb and Ageha

Which bar/nightclub should people should go to and why?
Trump Room has great decor although I haven't been in ages. I'm really into the little themed bars in Golden Gai, and there's a similar area in Shibuya.

Where's your favorite secret hangout?
Golden Gai. There are tiny bars that fit like, 3-8 people max, with all different themes. It's so interesting and fun.

Where can you eat the best sushi?
The Tsukiji fish market at like, 5 in the morning.







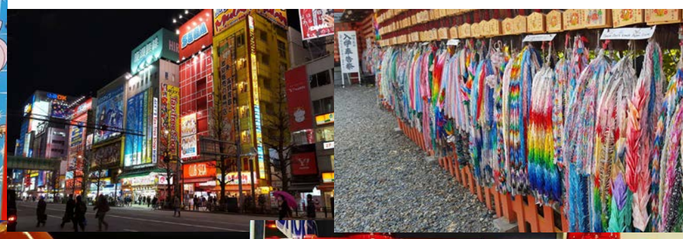














EDITOR ABROAD

story + photos / Erica Russell

Japanese pop culture worked itself into my life fairly early: My childhood was spent watching films like The Fantastic Adventures of Unico and My Neighbor Totoro, trading Pokémon cards and hunting down subtitled VHS tapes of Cardcaptor Sakura and Sailor Moon. Then, when I was about 12 years old, I started teaching myself Nihongo, language guides and audio-books at my side until I entered college, where I was finally able to take proper Japanese language and history courses and where my interests broadened to include everything from Bashō poetry to kanzashi craftsmanship.

In the spring of 2016, I finally went to Japan. After a six-month period of planning and prepping and panicking, as well as a Utada Hikaru-soundtracked 14-hour transpacific flight, I landed in Tokyo's futuristic Haneda Airport with too many suitcases and my decades-worth of fantasies in tow... and then I simply allowed myself to get lost in translation.

In Asakusa, I tasted dango and rode pastel swan boats in the country's oldest amusement park; in Harajuku, I weaved through tiny shopping backstreets and flashed peace signs in purikura photo booths; in Minato, I marveled at the endless twinkling skyline from atop Tokyo Tower, allowing the vastness of the world's largest metropolitan city to sink in. In Kyoto, a shinkansen ride away, I wandered through hundreds of red torii gates (and came out the opposite end engaged), and in Osaka, I tried the death-defying fugu and got drunk on sake while singing Ayumi Hamasaki songs at karaoke.

Japan is rife with incredible juxtaposition: Businessmen wearing stiff suits ride kawaii carousels at Tokyo Disneyland; quiet Buddhist monks sweep temple steps as wannabe teen pop idols entertain street crowds nearby; young women wearing traditional kimono shuffle into neon-bathed arcades, electronic music pumping from the doorway. At every corner something old blurs into something new — a 900 years-old pagoda looms proudly next to a sleek, towering silver skyscraper — and unlike New York City, my native stomping grounds, Tokyo bursts with color, from the oft-pastel architecture to the vibrant food to the bright, sometimes anarchic street fashion.

After spiriting away to the other side of the globe, I'd like to say I came back home to the States more complete, more whole by my experience in Japan. But the truth is I left an indescribable little part of myself in Tokyo, a fragment of my own wonder. Maybe (hopefully) I'll return for it someday.



LAVERNE COX

STORY / KOKO NTUEN
PHOTOS / JANELL SHIRTCLIFF
STYLING / JAK @ ATELIER MANAGEMENT
MAKEUP / DEJA SMITH FOR DD-PRO
HAIR / NEEKO @TRACEY MATTINGLY
NAILS / CHELSEA KING @ CELESTINE AGENCY
STYLING ASSISTANCE / XOCHI BARAJAS
PRODUCTION / ERICA RUSSELL & KOKO NTUEN
SHOT @ THE DREAM FACTORY LA

Powerhouse activist and superstar Laverne Cox is stuck in traffic when I catch her on the phone. She is airport-bound for the cross-continental leg from Los Angeles to New York. Like most of Hollywood's elite, she is accustomed to this flight. At the time, Cox is in production for the fifth season of groundbreaking Netflix series *Orange Is The New Black* and the CBS legal drama *Doubt*. She has also just wrapped her role in the much anticipated *Rocky Horror Picture Show* reprise, in which she stars as Dr. Frank-N-Furter. Between that, her schedule is jam-packed with appearances, talk show interviews, fundraisers, award shows, and all the other work obligations that come with being an A-lister.

These days, you can't escape her bombshell, wide-toothed smile. At this point, Laverne is a bonafide cultural icon. Her talks about gender rights have opened up conversations on a global level. Her 2015 *Time* magazine cover billed her as "America's Next Civil Rights Frontier" in its cover story, "The Transgender Tipping Point." She has won accolades and praise for her acting and advocacies in the media: 2016's Screen Actors Guild Award for Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Comedy Series, *Time*'s 100 Most Influential People, *People*'s World's Most Beautiful Women List 2015, GLAAD Media Stephen F. Kolzak Award, 2014's *Glamour*'s Woman of year, and Winner of a Daytime Emmy Award for her for *Laverne Cox Presents*: *The T Word*. She has written for the Huffington Post, been profiled by *The* New *York Times*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Vogue*, and she has proven herself to be an intelligent and informative media mainstay.

I grew up in the '90s, where entertainment and rhetoric were segregated, and opportunities for women of color on film were limited. It was a frustrating time for me as a child, trying to consume media and seeing so many stories dependent on ordained narratives. I became a critic at an early age, but also remained hopeful that the valiant efforts of the many actors, directors, producers and filmmakers of color would perhaps break these media chains. Well, the chains are indeed breaking, and Laverne Cox is a big part of this movement.

"That's a lot of work, to just show up and fully be yourself," she says. "There're so many forces out there. It's just the shame that I've internalized, the shame of what bell hooks calls 'the imperialist, white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchy.' Personal shame and then the systemic stuff that wants to keep people from being themselves—the callback culture that we exist in online. It's not easy. It's diligent work to say, I'm gonna show up and bring all of myself and not live in shame and be in a place where I really strive to love myself better today. That's work. That doesn't just happen."

Laverne has risen like a phoenix out of the ashes at a time where things could have seemed impossible. As a black woman, she is among the ranks of Beyonce, Serena, and Rihanna, when it comes to deserving single-name monikers. Watching her is a powerful experience. She demands respect and autonomy and is quick to navigate away from any damaging interrogations or dissections of her body. She does this in a gracious, lively, informative, and humble way that has left her with many fans, and she's getting offered roles that not only create visibility in Hollywood, but are a remarkable shift away from archaic templates.

"Face it, I'm a black transgender woman," she states, matter-of-factly. "It's not like there were all these parts. There was no space that existed for me before I created it. There were people like Candis Cayne and Alexandra Billings and Aleshia Brevard, out trans actresses who came before me. But I had to blaze my own path based on their influence. I just did a photoshoot for *Cosmopolitan* where I got to pay a tribute to some of my possibility models and super heroines. They were all black women: trailblazing, black women artists who have sort of been a blueprint for me throughout my career.

"I've blazed my own trail in a way," Laverne continues, "but there have been other people who have come before me who helped out a lot in terms of me figuring out how to be an artist, but also how to be politically engaged and how to balance that. That's still a struggle for me. There are a lot of issues that are important to me that I want to talk about. The LGBT Data Inclusion Act, for example, is something I have been talking a lot about, which would require federal governmental agencies to ask gender identity and sexual orientation questions so we can start to begin to gather better data about LGBT Americans...Violence against trans women is something I speak out a lot about. A young girl, who was in the *Laverne Cox Presents the T Word*, Daniella Carter, recently posted on her social media that she was attacked by three men in Las Vegas. This is a young girl who has already talked publicly about experiencing a lot of violence, the foster care system, and being homeless and she's still dealing with violence as a trans woman of color. Our lives are so often in danger simply for being who we are as transgender folks. That's something I want to talk about—and it's important for me to talk about."

At the same time, she says, she is an artist: "The reason people are listening to me is because I was so blessed to be on a popular and incredible show called *Orange is the New Black*. Finding the balance is something I look to other groundbreaking artists to guide me."



TOP, MAJE.
JAGUAR BROACH, ALEXIS BITTAR.
LARGE LUCITE HOOPS, ALEXIS BITTAR.
RED HEADSCARF, STYLISTS OWN.

ON COVER: RED COAT, MAJE.
NUDE BODYSUIT, REFORMATION.
LARGE GOLD PIN, ALEXIS BITTAR.
RED BERET, STYLISTS OWN.

It's a lot. How does she balance the juxtaposition of it all? "It's a tough terrain because there is a business," she tells me. "We're prepping for the Emmys now, so doing these award shows and award season and stuff—people dress you and they want shout outs and they should get them. There's a whole business around that. But then it's also the sense of we are more than our bodies or who we are wearing. This is what bell hooks calls the imperialist, capitalist, white supremacist patriarchy. The way that capitalism functions and makes changes—it really changes everything. It's something to be really critical of, even though I'm very much a part of the system now, and so many of us are living in contradictions."

Netflix, as she tells me, is one of those contradictory systems. "I would be delusional if I didn't think I was a cog in the system. Netflix is incredible and groundbreaking [and has] has revolutionized television. I don't think my rise would be possible if it weren't for a revolution in the way people watch television and the revolution of Netflix. At the same time, Netflix is in every country all over the world.... I feel blessed and grateful that I do what I do. I'm working within the system.... Both things can exist at the same time. Someone can be revolutionary and inside the system at the same time. My brother would argue that I'm revolutionary in some ways and not in others."

As a natural performer, Laverne has perfected an excellent craft with her body and is known for her no-holds-barred dance performances at parties and on her social media. While filming the first season of *OITNB*, she famously moonlighted at New York City's drag cabaret bar, Lucky Cheng's. Dancing is fun, but is also a skill Laverne approached like studying science.

"I danced as early as I can remember," she reveals. "I would dance around everywhere. I would always have music in my head. I always wanted to dance and begged my mother to put me into dance classes. Finally, in the third grade, I started studying dance. So I have been performing my whole life: getting up in church and making speeches, doing talent shows all over Alabama and the Southeast, And then as a dance major in high school at the Alabama School of Fine Arts. Then, as a dance major in college. I started acting in college and doing musicals and plays. It's been my whole life..."

"Training has been really important," the actress adds. "Talent is cultivated. You don't have to deal with the process of trying to cultivate that talent. A lot of people have natural ability and natural talent. I think for me, it's been very necessary to cultivate that talent."

When I watch Laverne on TV or doing press, her rhetoric always seems to navigate towards broader issues. The way she shifts the conversation from vapid and superficial to conscious and political breaks the wall of the traditional commercial media narrative. At a time where she could easily float by on her beauty and success, Laverne uses her celebrity to change the word. Her famous Katie Couric interview turned the mainstream media on its head when Laverne all but schooled the seasoned media anchor about how to speak in about transgender politics in a safe and respectful way.

Laverne laughs when I bring this up. "My friend Tiq Milan, who used to work at GLAAD, does media training. He often uses my Katie Couric interview as an example on how to pivot, which is kind of cool....I think there's a lot of things that need to change in the world and I'm speaking from my heart," she explains. "But I'm also trying to speak from an informed place that's empirical in terms of my own personal experiences and other trans folks I know and women I know and people of color that I know. And then policy, and trying to marry that with some kind of public policy."

"The fight in being in entertainment is two-fold," she continues. "So much of what I do in media is about changing hearts and mind. But we also need our policymakers and our politicians, and our judges and what happens in the courts is so crucial and so important."

That said, Laverne reveals that this election cycle, she's with Her: "That's another reason why I'm supporting Hillary Clinton. The Supreme Court and the federal judges we appoint are going to be so crucial in deciding these issues. A woman's right to choose, voting rights, trans rights, protecting LGBT rights, maybe overturning Citizens United so we can get some campaign finance reform so we can have better democracy... all these things are really crucial issues that we have to come out and vote for. We have to vote."

Together, we reminisce for a moment about Barack Obama. "We have been blessed to have him in the White House," Laverne gushes. "I have so much love and affection and adoration for the Obama administration. And, of course, his lovely wife and family. I just adore the Obamas."

Using her celebrity platform, Laverne hopes to educate and inform her fans, her followers, and perhaps even her detractors, while remaining an entertainment fixture. It's a powerful position to be in, one which is well-deserved.

"I feel blessed that I have been able to bring all of me to the work that I do in the media. I think for a while I thought that if I wanted to be mainstream I needed to dumb myself down," she admits. "It's really exciting that I don't have to do that. I don't think anyone should ever do that, actually. I've learned that I can show up and be me. I love pop culture...but I also am an intersectional feminist who is politically engaged. Being able to bring those things as well has been really empowering for me. I think that's where my power lies right now."

Soon, Laverne arrives at the airport and her publicist jumps in to say our time is over. I jumble a few words together: I tell her thank you for being you, I tell her I'm rooting her for her, I tell her I wish we were related—I might have even have told her I love her. And as we hang up, I image her hair billowing in the wind as she steps onto the tarmac. Her plane takes off and she's gone, off to change the world.

WHITE KNIT TOP, COS.
SMALL WHITE BERET, MONTEZ (AVAILABLE AT THE MILLINERY GUILD).





TURTLENECK, THEORY. SCARF, STYLIST'S OWN.
SUNGLASSES, VINTAGE (AVAILABLE AT HOTEL DE VILLE EYEWEAR).

OPPOSITE PAGE: TURTLENECK, THEORY.
HAT, MONTEZ (AVAILABLE AT THE MILLINERY GUILD).
LEATHER GLOVES, GASPAR.



DRESS, C/MEO COLLECTIVE, SHOES, KEKE'S OWN.

KEKE PALMER

STORY / ALYSSA HARDY

PHOTOS / KATY PRITCHETT

STYLING / KOKO NTUEN

MAKEUP / ERIN MOFFET @ CELESTINE AGENCY

HAIR / HAILEY ADICKES @ CELESTINE AGENCY

Before talking to her, I only knew of Keke Palmer through her characters. On Ryan Murphy's *Scream Queens* she plays Zayday Williams, the outspoken, studious and only black Kappa Kappa Tau sister. Her archetype serves as satirical commentary on the divisiveness of sorority culture, but with Keke's touch she's become so much more. Like Zayday, Keke is surprisingly self-aware for being only 23 years old. She discusses her humble beginnings not as a way to share a false sense of realness, but to let her fans know that hard work does pay off. She doesn't want them to think of her as a celebrity. She wants to know them and talk with them. As she, herself puts it, "I want it to be a, 'Yo, we're friends' kind of thing."

If you follow Keke on Twitter, you can see how she stays true to this mission statement. She's constantly having conversations with her followers about everything from Black Lives Matter to her new blue hair. She's exceptionally cool, talking to them the same way you would anyone you know personally. When she posted her latest music video, she genuinely asked her fans for feedback—a brave move given how quickly the platform can go negative.

As Keke moves into a new stage of her career with an album and another season of her hit television show, it's fascinating to watch her gracefully navigate her way through fame, recognition and power. She's setting a new bar for the 20-something starlet: Be yourself and don't apologize.

What was your upbringing in Chicago like?

I grew up in a really small town. I had no grocery store, nothing like that. I think now it has a gas station, but I always got to do creative things because there was nothing else to do. On Sundays we went to church and we got to bring joy through singing. We were able to forget about our problems. When we had a barbecue, with food and singing and dancing, we made the best out of everything. It's a great sense of community that I feel like sometimes only those types of neighborhoods have. I remember when I went to my first third world country I could see that there's happiness here. There's people struggling in poverty but honestly people are happy, you know, because they know they need to stick together. My family had its ups and downs but community, that's what it's about.

You got your first big break in Barber Shop when you were very young. How did your friends react to that?

Well, it was weird. It seemed like oh, they were fine with it, but it was something that my family and I were very quiet about. We weren't always saying, "I did a movie" because I didn't really start understanding the movie business aspect of things until like years later. I never really thought of it like that. I didn't think, "Oh, I'm in the movies." I was like, "I act." So for me it was like a hobby, almost like Taekwondo class. It was a very personal thing for me and my mom... It took a while for me to realize that it had a perception attached to it. It took a while for me to learn what that perception was and I think it was around the time that I was like 12 or 13 or so in the industry that I first understood what it was for somebody to be really jealous. I like competition and competing, but my competition wasn't based off of me getting this over the other person. It's based on: this person motivates me, like this person is trying. And even though we're not working together we drive each other to want to be great. And I never really thought of it as this idea of oh, I'm better than this person. So when I would go into auditions and there was friction between me and other people, it meant more than people just having fun. It meant more than people just doing art. You know, sometimes you can be called up the next day, and that's a thing in acting.

***Scream Queens* is a major success. What has this past year been like for you personally?**

After *Scream Queens*, I felt the change and shift. You know, I really would love to give it a break with this hyper celebrity, hyper fame thing. There was a time where people could talk to their favorite baseball player like he was a regular person on the street. And I would really love to explore the concept of where it's like, why do we put people on these pedestals? You know, when that's not what this is about.I love my fans. I really talk to them on social media. I reach out and I like to keep the conversation because I don't want it to be a fan thing, I want it to be a regular thing. I want it to be a, "Yo, we're friends" kind of thing. So when I see them and a lot of times the moment is kind of captivated by them wanting to get a picture, I feel like we really miss out on the moment because there's stuff we really want to talk about. There's so many other things to do with time. There's so many other things I would like to know about the people that like my music, but you won't even let me know your name. You miss out on a lot.

That's so cool of you. That's different.

I love the aspect of being a celebrity in the sense that people know me immediately and there's a feeling of automatically being approached, but the feeling of people knowing me is overshadowed by fame. And then it becomes a hierarchy. And that's what I hate.

Your role on *Scream Queens* is obviously satirical. It's interesting timing because of the conversation around the lack of inclusiveness on campuses. How do you think the shows fits into that?

I feel like everything that Ryan Murphy does is very bold. We tackle really strange issues but he does it in a way that feels lighthearted. I think that's why I'm so proud of his work because I like the same thing. I like to tackle really deep issues but I like to do it in a way that's fun and relatable. Like we're able to talk about it and converse on it and not feel uncomfortable because we can laugh and say this is an open environment. I don't have to be all uptight about





TOP AND PANTS, THE FIFTH LABEL. HAT, KOKO CELESTE.

it. With *Glee* and then with *Scream Queens* we can talk about all the ridiculous shit that's going on whether it's sexism, racism, girl-on-girl mean girl culture; we can tackle all that and still make you feel like the conversation can be fun and important without tip-toeing around the subject.

In what ways do you relate to your character if any at all?
I relate to her in a lot of ways! Many times, I think that a character has certain parts of you and you can play up parts that you have in common. [With Zayday], I think they definitely play up on that she's an overachiever and I can definitely relate to that 100%. I'm very driven and I've always had my hands in so many different things and I'm always trying to hold myself to a certain amount of standards. So I think that's something I definitely relate on.

A place where I see a commonality is with your style. You both are edgy and daring.
I definitely love my wardrobe stylist, Lauren, on Scream Queens. She's brilliant. She always laughs because she says I talk about Zayday like she's not me but she so is when it comes to style! I'm at a point when I'm learning myself and learning to be more expressive. Style ties into that.

Another thing you have in common with your character is strength. That's really hard to find so young. Where do you find yours?
I find my power in accepting my life as it is, not shaming myself for any moment or anything that I have done. Truly trying my damnedest to accept myself and not wait for anyone else to accept me. Take the time to listen to yourself. Write it down. Understand your-

Keke Palmer's EP LAUREN is out now on Island Records.

ALL CLOTHING, THE ORDER. BOOTS, KEKE'S OWN.

WHITE MOTO JACKET, BOOKER.
DRESS, AMERICAN APPAREL. SHOES, ADIDAS.



SHIRT, IUUN. OVERALLS, AMI CLUBWEAR

HALEY LU RICHARDSON

STORY / AVERY STONE
PHOTOS / AUBREY DEVIN
MAKEUP / SAMUEL PAUL
HAIR / CHRISTIAN MARC
STYLING / MATTHEW HENSLEY
PRODUCTION / ERICA RUSSELL

Actress Haley Lu Richardson is on the edge of her big break—literally. This fall, the 21-year-old stars in the drama-comedy *The Edge of Seventeen* as Krista, a wise-beyond-her-years high schooler whose relationship with her best friend, Nadine (Hailee Steinfeld), is tested when she falls for Nadine's older brother.

"Their friendship is a pretty cool dynamic," Richardson says, speaking over the phone from her home in Topanga Canyon, right outside of Los Angeles. "Nadine is a bit lost and wacky. She embarrasses herself and goes through all these struggles, and Krista is kind of her rock. But when Krista starts dating Nadine's older brother, I feel like [the film] could so easily have gone to a place of like, 'Oh, they're enemies now.' But Krista wasn't out to get Nadine—she just ended up in this position where she wants to explore this [relationship] for herself, but that maybe it doesn't have to ruin [their friendship]. And that, if anything, maybe it can bring them all closer together, or Nadine and her brother closer together. She's not the stereotypical villain."

And for Richardson, there was no better scene partner than Steinfeld: "It was super easy playing best friends with Hailee," she says of the 19-year-old Oscar nominee. "We had such a good time. I was really inspired by her. She's younger than me, but she has such a strong sense of her work and she's so confident in her choices, because she's been acting for so long."

Surprisingly, Richardson hasn't been. Even though she's a self-described ham ("It's part of the baggage of being an only child," she says, laughing) and tried musical theater as kid, acting wasn't the center of her young life. Rather, from ages nine to fifteen, she devoted herself to competitive dance. "I learned to be really hard on myself [through dance]," she admits, "which can be detrimental if it's not balanced. It's one of those best friend-frenemy things I have with my own self. But [dance] was still the only that really meant anything to me besides my family and friends."

However, when she started considering her future, the Arizona native found herself at a crossroads. She wasn't psyched about the thought of attending a traditional college ("My friends had Stanford flags up in their rooms. I was never that kid!"), but she also couldn't see herself dancing professionally. So she pitched an idea to her mom and dad: She wanted to move to Los Angeles to give acting a serious shot.

Her parents weren't keen on the idea at first, but after numerous discussions—Richardson even made a poster-board mapping out where she'd live, how she'd finish school, how they'd do it financially—they said yes. So, at 16, she and her mom moved to the City of Angels, where she finished high school online. But once she turned 18, her mom moved back to Arizona, and the pressure was on.

"Since I've been living here on my own," she explains. "The only person I have to rely on to hold me accountable for anything—to have me to go auditions, to get me to work on time, to keep me going even when things get really tough—is myself."

Luckily, Richardson doesn't flinch under pressure—and so far, she's been up to the challenge. In 2015, she starred as an Olympic hopeful gymnast in *The Bronze*. And after *The Edge of Seventeen*, she she'll appear opposite James McAvoy in M. Night Shyamalan's upcoming feature, *Split*, slated for release in 2017. No pressure.



CROP TOP AND DRESS, TOPSHOP. JACKET, ALL SAINTS.

PAULINA SINGER

STORY / AVERY STONE
PHOTOS / MARIA DEL RIO
STYLING / ASHLEY BIRONDO
HAIR & MAKEUP / MERRIELLE ITALIA

Paulina Singer isn't afraid to take risks. These days, you may know the fresh-faced actress as counselor Jessie Tyler on Freeform's summer-camp-meets-supernatural-horror series, *Dead of Summer*. But even though the role put Singer on the map (*NYLON* recently deemed her one to watch in their "Young Hollywood" issue), acting wasn't always at the center of her life plan.

Originally from New Hampshire, Singer packed up and moved to New York City for college, choosing to study dance, acting and psychology at the New School. But after her freshman year, she dropped out to pursue acting full-time—a decision she doesn't regret, even a little bit.

"[Dropping out] just felt right," Singer says simply, speaking to us over the phone from Williamsburg, Brooklyn. "I was paying a lot of money [for college]. It's weird to me [that I would] pay to be told that something is the way it is. Like, no one actually knows—why would I pay you for that knowledge?"

When Singer left school, she could have gone in many different directions: In addition to acting and dance, she writes and produces music under an alter-ego, and is passionate about environmental issues. Still, acting won out, partly because of her experience training with the renowned New York-based improv group, Upright Citizens Brigade, which she joined when she was 19.

"[Improv] is really nerve-wracking," she reveals. "But it's the root of acting, because acting is really like reacting. It's putting yourself in a moment and not having a choice to feel like it's real or not, because you're making up what happens next … People have a really weird perception of how they think they would act [in a certain situation], but you don't really know how you would say or feel about something until you're faced with it."

From there it makes sense that once equipped with an acting coach and manager, Singer beefed up her resume quickly, nabbing a diverse array of television roles—including HBO's *How to Make It In America*, Showtime's *The Affair*, Fox's Gotham and CBS's *Person of Interest*. As for the big screen, Singer recently appeared opposite Robert DeNiro and Anne Hathaway in *The Intern*. And that's just the beginning: In 2017, she'll appear as part of *Wilde Wedding's* star-studded ensemble cast (including Glenn Close, John Malkovich and Patrick Stewart). This fall, she'll also finish shooting the upcoming feature *High School Lover*, in which she plays a young girl who has an affair with an older man (and in which James Franco stars as her father).

Though Singer's acting career is just picking up steam, she already knows what type of character she's most interested in playing: someone whose point of view she doesn't inherently agree with or understand. "I know my perspective," she says. "So it's not as hard to be thinking in the same way all the time than [it is] to open up your eyes. You can get a better perception of [a different] perspective by acting from that perspective."

AYA CASH

STORY / KOKO NTUEN
PHOTOS / SHANNA FISHER
STYLING / CHRIS HORAN @ TMG LA
MAKEUP / STEPHEN SOLLITTO @ TMG LA
HAIR / CHRISTIAN MARC @ FORWARD ARTIST

When I meet Aya Cash, the red-headed firecracker star of FXX's series *You're The Worst*, it's an unusually hot Los Angeles morning. She has just started filming the third season of the hit show which, in general, has been as buzzy as can be online, yet she still acts as casual and cool as a barista working at a Williamsburg coffee shop. The first thing she does in a low-key yet glamorous way is welcome me like we've known each other for years, and then ask me who makes the blue kaftan I'm wearing (shout out to Rodebjer). She immediately follows the designer on Instagram and thanks me.

Raised in San Francisco in an eccentric household surrounded by artists and creatives (her mother is esteemed poet Kim Addonizio), offscreen Cash could easily be the muse of a Woody Allen vehicle. She is a seasoned actress who has appeared in blockbuster hits like *The Wolf of Wall Street* and *Begin Again*, and her television credits include fan favorites like *Modern Family*, *Law & Order*, *The Newsroom* and *The Good Wife*.

On *You're The Worst*, Cash stars as Gretchen Cutler, a work-obsessed, tortured PR girl with relatable problems and a cute, semi-fucked up relationship. Topics like mental health, sex, death, depression, marriage, dating and work are presented in a sensitive yet hilarious way, and the first episode preps you for the rambunctious, gnarly energy of the show as words like "blowjob" and "fucktard" are weaved into the characters' brassy vernacular with ease.

"Yeah, the pilot kind of just preps you for anything. And then we calm down a little bit," Cash says, grinning. Her earnest yet deadpan delivery and relatable character quickly propelled her the actress into the spotlight as the patron saint of, well, each of us. Cash acts out scenes with intensity and comedic delivery juxtaposed with delight. It makes her extremely watchable on screen, and has earned her a number of Critics Choice Award nominations and a ton of Emmy buzz.

As we speak, Cash talks about collaborating with her mother, Internet trolls and her role on *You're The Worst*.

***You're The Worst* has some pretty vulgar lines and scenes. Have you ever felt prudish about any of the material?**
My mom writes about sex and drugs and drinking. So, it was a part of my upbringing to be candid about that kind of stuff. Sometimes probably too candid, but no, I wasn't uncomfortable at all. Also, the lines are funny and character-driven, so it never felt like we were saying or doing things for shock value. It all made sense to me. When I was in high school I wrote poems about sitting on Santa's lap and feeling his erection—which, by the way, never happened. But I thought that titillating stuff was cool.

That's great you grew up with this all this creativity and adult humor.
My dad is a Buddhist priest now, so you wouldn't think. But he's also pretty frank. He's maybe less obvious than my mom. My mom, you see her and she's got tattoos and piercings and fingerless gloves. She's kind of an outward badass. So my dad, too, is pretty open. He used to do naked street theater. Neither one of them were prudes, and [they're] both incredibly artistic as well.

Where did you grow up?
I grew up in San Francisco, on 19th and Castro. When I was seven, I told my mom I wanted to be a man dressed up as a woman for Halloween. And she said, 'You mean a drag queen?' And I said, 'No, like the one at the grocery store.' I just had no concept. I grew up in a total bubble. But when people think of bubbles, they think of possibly a conservative bubble. I grew up in a liberal bubble. I didn't know about homophobia.

It sounds very San Francisco! How did you get into acting?
I went to the Arts High School and I auditioned for acting only because my best friend was auditioning for acting and I needed to go to a public school because we didn't get scholarships into private schools. So, my friend was like, "Pick something in the arts," and I picked acting. I started doing all these Shakespeare competitions and doing fairly well at them and traveling because of that. I thought, "Oh, this could be something I can do." I really love Shakespeare, he's probably why I started acting. I love the homework of it, figuring it all out and making things funny to a modern audience is very satisfying. But also I did like, Queen Margaret from King Henry V Part III. I thought I was gonna be a dramatic actor. And then, I was sort of unintentionally funny at first, then I was like, "Oh! This works!" I think I probably took myself too seriously, so then people thought I was funny. Then I was like, well, that's immediate feedback, I want that. You can't tell if they're into it in drama.

***You're the Worst* was among the first wave of these millennial-esque shows where the conversations and scenarios have been really relatable. There's one scene where your character is walking with her boyfriend and just starts crying. He's just talking and going on and not even recognizing that you are in pain. It's a funny show, but it also hits really close to home in that achy, personal way.**
I think [showrunner] Stephen Falk really hit on something that we were missing in our media. Now we have more examples of shows like this. A lot of the things that came out around the time of You're the Worst suddenly hit a form, like BoJack Horseman and Broad City—all these things are similar in that way.

Is there anything that you would like to do that you guys haven't done on the show?
I get to read the scripts like a fan. I read them in chunks. We read about four or five at a time, depending on how many we're shooting in that block. I like to see what the writers come up with. My ideas are never as good. So just reading the scripts, I get to really, truly enjoy the show for what it is. I like that.

When do you feel like you're the most powerful?
I would say I feel the most powerful when I'm with friends or with my husband. I feel powerful at work after a great day where everything has gone really well and everyone's in a good mood. I think being on a show and being one of the leads...it's your responsibility to create a positive work environment and to make everyone feel good and do your job well—be prepared and all that. That feels powerful. A lot of times when you're a guest star, you're coming onto someone else's set and someone else's experience; you don't know the ins and outs. It's an adjustment period. On our show, I think we all feel really good when we all make a really good work environment.



DRESS, PHILOSOPHY DI LORENZO SERAFINI. EARRING, STYLIST'S OWN.



BLOUSE, SKIRT AND NECKLACE, DORIANE VAN OVEREEM.

NATALIA DYER

STORY & STYLING / ERICA RUSSELL

PHOTOS / ANDREW T. WHITE

MAKEUP / ANA MARIA

HAIR / MATTHEW MONZON

ASSISTANCE / CHRISTA ALEXIS BRAMANTE

In 2016, Americans and beyond were terrified by a looming, evil presence on their television screens... And no, I'm not talking about Donald Trump at the presidential debates, but rather the diabolical "Demogorgon" on Netflix's runaway smash hit, *Stranger Things*—the show we all binge-watched (and rewatched) this year.

Hearkening back to the nostalgic Steven Spielberg-era family horror of the '80s, Stranger Things became, ironically, the least strange and most comforting escape in a world gone mad when it premiered on the streaming service over the summer. Its cast of endearing, relatable kids anchored the show's otherwise dark, nefarious premise with a sense of levity and lightheartedness. Natalia Dyer was one of those kids—or rather, teenager.

Playing Nancy Wheeler, the high school-aged big sis to Mike, the Eleven-crushin', Dungeons and Dragons player trying to unravel the mystery of his disappeared friend, Dyer's character started off as the typical vision of any early '80s cinematic teen girl: an eye-rolling, boy obsessed princess caught between the coming-of-age worlds of popularity and authentic friendship and self-discovery. Facing incredible danger, however, Nancy quickly evolved into one of the show's most badass feminist players alongside Winona Ryder's desperate, relentless Joyce Byers and Millie Bobby Brown's fierce fan-favorite Eleven.

"I'm so happy with the way Nancy turned out," Dyer gushes of her character, who at one point in the show ventures off into the Upside Down armed with nothing but a pistol to search for her own lost BFF, Barb. "The response is really satisfying. There's a lot of damsel and victim roles around. It was nice for me to get to play a girl who finds her strength, who is really courageous and does cool things...I hope that I brought that to life in some way. Nancy is all badass. I always love to give credit to the Duffers for giving the backbone to that character."

The Duffers are, of course, the Duffer Brothers, the showrunners (or masterminds, really) behind *Stranger Things*, which will explore the aftermath of Will Byers' disappearing and reappearing act in Season 2 in 2017. And while the show famously takes place in the fictional town of Hawkins, Indiana in the autumn of 1983, Dyer, 21, never actually spent a day in the '80s. Instead, she explains she watched a whole lot of genre films from the period to prepare for her role as Nancy—who, incidentally, shares the same name as another iconic '80s horror heroine.

"Watching [*A Nightmare on Elm Street*] was actually a big part of my homework, because I hadn't seen it," the actress shares. "They were like, 'You gotta watch this, and you gotta watch that!' It took some guts, because I know it's kind of gory—that lovely '80s gore that's kind of hilarious, but also gross when you watch by yourself... I think they actually reference the character [of Nancy Thompson] a couple of times. It's a different vibe, but I think there's definitely some inspiration there. "In fact, Dyer's preparation for the show involved an entire movie marathon. "I definitely spent some time [watching films like] *Poltergeist*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*... I hadn't seen things like *Pretty in Pink* or *Sixteen Candles* until then," she reveals. "I had to give myself a little bit of time to catch up. For my mom, it's funny, I think it was the biggest time of her life, so I kind of grew up talking about the fashion, music and dancing...'80s everything with her. It was nice to experience that. There's an innocence to that time period. It's a pre-iPhone, pre-technology era. It's nice to play around in that mindset."

Indeed, one of the funniest moment in Season 1 is when Hopper, the town's Chief of Police, goes to the library to pull out some dusty old newspaper clippings during his investigation into the bizarre events plaguing Hawkins. As a viewer in 2016, it's a stark contrast from the modern methods of DIY research, and it's played both for laughs and, in a way, social commentary.

"We were talking about how now it would be so silly," Dyer agrees, laughing. "Now you have apps, GPS on your phone, Find My Friend—there's a lot more mystery to play around with on the show. You don't know everything. Now we have Google!"

Dyer's immersion into the Reagan Era extended well beyond genre film references and technology, however, and into the show's cast itself: Her co-star, Ryder, is a bona fide '80s and '90s screen icon, having solidified her status among the pop culture elite in a string of cult classics, from *Beetlejuice* to *Heathers* to *Edward Scissorhands*. Working alongside the actress was a poignant learning experience for Dyer.

"I'm really impressed and inspired by the way she handles herself, her career and her exposure," she shares of her experience working with the beloved actress. "Winona is just graceful...[and] so real in person. I learned a lot in terms of how to handle myself and carry myself. She has a lot of fame! And she's had it ever since she was very young. That's hard to deal with and I think she's done it very well. I know that if I ever need anything I can ask her. She is very endearing and genuine and very talented; it's no small thing to watch her do her thing in person. It's a cool gift."

As for the future of the kids of Hawkins, Indiana, viewers can certainly expect more, well, strange things in Season 2. Dyer, however, just hopes the characters we all fell in love with can resolve some of the lingering mysteries.

"This group of characters' lives is horribly turned upside down," she muses. "It's really ripe for exploring what happens next and how everybody copes with what happened... [I'd love to see] how characters interact more, what their relationships are to each other, and learn more about what's going on in that other dimension. The emotional impact of everything is what interests me."

She pauses, then laughs a little. "And I would love to see justice for Barb."



DRESS, CATERINA GATTA. JEWELRY, BROKEN ENGLISH JEWELRY.

STORY / KOKO NTUEN
PHOTOS / JANA CRUDER
STYLING /JOLEEN GARNETT & STACEY KALCHMAN
MAKEUP / STARYLNN BURDEN
HAIR / TALLULAH HOLMES

RUTINA WESLEY

Natalie Baszile's breathtaking novel *Queen Sugar* tells the spectacular tale of the Bordelons, a black Southern family left at a crossroad when they inherit an 800 acre sugar farm after the patriarch of the family passes. The heirs' lives clash together in an extremely dramatic way that pulls at heartstrings and leaves you in suspense in this literary masterpiece. From filmmaker Ava DuVernay and executive producer the Queen Oprah Winfrey herself came a brilliant television adaptation that vividly brings the novel to life. The Bordelon family's diverse portrayals and the characters' autonomous stories bring a new black life to America's screens. Rutina Wesley stars in the series, playing Nova Bordelon, one of the three siblings inheriting the farm.

Rutina is a skilled lead actress on her way to becoming a household name, having also starred in HBO heavyweight drama *True Blood* as Tara. In *Queen Sugar*, Wesley plays a different kind of southern belle. Nova is a complicated journalist and an activist at heart. Wesley brings a complex realness to the character that feels relatable. She takes you to a parallel life, portrayed so realistically as if it's in her own light. Nova is a passionate writer who ignites social change, an especially poignant role in today's political climate. Rutina agrees.

"Playing Nova and working with Ava and Oprah and everyone has been incredible for me. I've really learned a lot about myself through working on Nova," Rutina admits. "She inspires me as a person. Let's get activated! It's been really important to me to uphold that as Rutina the actor. The platform that I have as an actor: I wanna make sure that I'm spreading love, because I think that's what the world needs right now. That's my own opinion, but I think I could stand to give a little more compassion, love, light."

Her successful network hits make Rutina a hot commodity in Hollywood. When I ask her how she stays humble, she tells me her family is the key to keeping her in check.

"My grandmother, my mom, my dad were in the business," she explains. "They've always said, 'Be you, but remain humble. Have grace.'

"Really and truly? Ego aside, and pride aside, this show has received so much love from people who I admire... And it's all coming from love, because people are recognizing the work that we are doing." While the show makes important strides in representation, Rutina admits there are distractions. "I mean, people are talking about how pretty Kofi Siriboe is, who plays Love Angel. He's so pretty; I have to tease him. Sorry Ko. But people are also talking about the work, you know? I think that's what's so important."

Getting the part came with auditions and meetings as expected, but Rutina's journey felt predestined. When she met Ava DuVernay, there was a comfort there that took away the grind of a normal audition. She remembers being at ease and recalls her inner dialogue that day: "Be in your truth. Just be you, Rutina, just be you. You good. You ain't gotta be nothing extra, be yourself right now." She gushes, "she has that type of spirit that's very engaging and easy—she's not asking anything of you other than just be you. That was a beautiful 45 minutes."

As Rutina was leaving her meeting with Ava, she ran into Dawn-Lyen Gardner, current costar on the series and an old friend she hadn't seen in five years. Dawn-Lyen was also auditioning for the project. When they ran into each other, there were screams of joy and a five minute catch up. And as Rutina left it seemed like all of the pieces were coming together in magical and serendipitous way. They were.

Rutina recalls the moment she found heard the good news. "Ava calls me. She says... 'this is a very special part, the part I created, and I would love for you to play Nova.' My whole world shut down for a minute. She was like, 'just so you know, I've also cast Dawn-Lyen as Charlie.' And that was... I almost either hung up the phone or dropped the phone. I didn't really know what to do! Cut to Dawn, who is literally on a plane about to leave for New York. I text her and I said, 'Hey! Wanna cocktail with Nova?' She was like, 'Uh, I guess? Back up in New Orleans or what?' I was like, 'No... so I'll see you in NOLA?' There was a pause and then she sends me in all caps this five page 'OMG OMG OMG.' She didn't know, so I was the one who told her that I got the part. She already knew that she was cast, but she didn't know I was. It was really joyous for me to be able to share it with her... That was all through text. So we really did actually finally get to see each other. It was just this embrace of 'oh my god.'"

The way the actors in *Queen Sugar* vibe off each other in scenes of joy and pain make watching them as siblings an especially interesting anchor of the story. Rutina feels a special bond with the narrative and her character that bring her a sense of visibility that has been especially enlightening. "I feel seen. I feel like Ava sees me. She sees Dawn. She sees Timon. She sees Omar. She sees Tina. She really sees us. It's so beautiful to me, because I feel like when you're seen and it is inclusive, this is the type of show you get. Everyone is happy; people are happy to be there. It allows for this incredible sense of freedom."

Rutina describes first stepping on set with adoration. "It was truly a magical experience, and I choose the word magical very carefully, because from the moment I got there and stepped out onto the sugar cane fields in New Orleans, it has a very particular energy, which I think we needed for our show to be what it is. It does have an authenticity to it... You can feel the energy of the city."

The actress' longtime friends and fans are equally excited about the show and it's unique position in television. Already renewed for a second season, Queen Sugar has been getting rave reviews and a growing a rabid fan base. "It's so thrilling for me when I get texts from friends, friends who I dearly respect who say, 'girl, I don't know what y'all are doing, what y'all dipped into, or what y'all drinking over there, but keep doing it.' It's just really beautiful, and it's unsolicited. It's genuine support for the show, it's not the, 'I haven't even watched the show, but I'm supporting it because I think that would be the cool thing to do.' People are actually like, 'Hey guys, I'm on the ride with you. We are with you.' And I just love it. I'm so proud. We've worked really hard to be as authentic to our stories as possible--to really come from a place of truth. I think that's important.

"I'm excited that the show is reaching different people. It is indeed universal... It's just nice to know it's reaching different families of different colors and a lot of people recognize it. I think that's pretty special to have that, especially now when there is a lot of separation. A lot of people have come together on Queen Sugar... I have people who are in the Midwest, some of my friends who are white or Latina, their grandmothers... It's everywhere. There's a lot of love everywhere. It's quite wonderful. "

On meeting Oprah, Rutina admits she was nervous: "I kept running away whenever she was on set," she laughs, "but when we met, she hugged me, and she was very open. Her embrace was very warm. I also felt seen with her. It was as it should be. And I was like, 'I have nothing to be scared of here. I can actually act from a place that isn't fear. Without fear, I can just act with abandon.' How beautiful is that?"

Rutina leaves our conversation with a mantra from her dear mentor and teacher at Juilliard, Courtney B. Vance. "Sometimes we have to be still." She admits not understanding immediately. "The moment I was still with myself for a minute, Queen Sugar came into my world," she says. "It's really interesting how your life really can shift when you stop and listen and you're patient, you're gentle with yourself. You take time and take care of yourself in the process. You do have to take care of yourself. You have to do it yourself, because no one is gonna do that better than you, really. That's just how I feel. "

Spoken like a true Queen.



SUIT, ZARA.
TURTLENECK AND SHOES, H&M STUDIO.
SOCKS, GAP.

SIMON HELBERG

STORY / MEGAN LABER
PHOTOS / EVAN DUNING
STYLING / HANNI FOX
GROOMING / ELIE MAALOUF @ JED ROOT

The moans of Hollywood can be heard echoing through the hills by film industry hopefuls on the brink, a sound that has been ringing there probably as long as the iconic sign has been up. It's not often someone makes it on to something greater, let alone commits "the jump," the move from successful television sitcom to major motion pictures. That is why Simon Helberg, best known for his absurdist remarks and perfectly timed awkward advances as Howard Holowitz on *The Big Bang Theory* is a shining example of taking your dreams seriously, as well as the "right place, right time" mentality.

With a ten year running mark on *Big Bang,* and an upcoming season scheduled for filming, Helberg took a meeting with director Stephen Frears for a role in *Florence Foster Jenkins* after casting pushed for the two to sit down together.

"My hero in this whole story is the casting director," the actor says. "Because Stephen is so eccentric and brilliant, he lives on a different plane than the rest of us. The guy is this genius, and I think it can be hard to fully comprehend what goes through someone's head when they're like that. He seemed unfamiliar with me and the show, which didn't surprise me, but he trusted his people and what they were saying about my role. We sat down and met, and one of the first things he asked me was how well I play piano."

Starring alongside Meryl Streep and Hugh Grant, Helberg's role of Cosme McMoon, realist accompanying pianist to the slightly delusional socialite who wants to be a great opera singer, hits this mark that Helberg is well known for: unique comedic relief in the midst of out-there circumstances. Bouncing off the energy of a well-collected Grant and an ever-dynamic and eccentric Streep, Helberg maintains his own presence, something which has been praised by his co-stars in other interviews.

"I've never done this before, this scope and size of a film," Helberg reveals. "This script and character alone would have made me take this. I felt like I could lend my voice. I'm attracted to characters with a distorted sense of who they are, despite their differences and oddities."

But one thing was missing from Helberg's ability to take the role, and that was an exceptional knowledge of piano.

"I bit off a bit more than I could chew. I rented an apartment in Koreatown to get away from my house, and learned all of this music, and took lessons which was essentially a crash course in technique. I had to work with someone to get the look of being classically trained."

Perfectly timed during a break for *Big Bang*, Helberg committed heart and soul to getting the character down, to the point where what you see in the film is not sound played over cinematography, but instead Streep singing and Helberg playing live for the audience.

"I had a few months to get into it, and once I met Meryl we had to jump into the volcano together. It came together so fast, but we looked at each other as a team. It was amazing to work with someone at that caliber."

Insane frenzy to learn a new instrument aside, it takes a lot to combine that with taking on the persona of a different person, especially when you've become so familiar with someone like quirky Howard. With any new position or transition, we all have the ability to take away something bigger, especially when you get to step into the literal shoes of another human. What Helberg took away from McMoon is a more optimistic outlook.

"I admire this quality in the character, a complete lack of judgement and cynicism," he shares. "He has a glass half-full view of everything, that Florence also has. You wouldn't guess you're walking into a guise for this woman that everyone has constructed. You see this character see the crack in the entire plan, but goes into the venture with this purity and an open heart. I think we could all use a little more of that in our perception of how we look at things."

And for fans awaiting *The Big Bang Theory* news and what's to come for the series' tenth season, Helberg says the evolution of growing up with his character has been an experience in itself.

"The show is exploring parenthood now! That feels crazy to think about when we look back ten years. We have Judd Hirsch, Katey Sagal, and just a wonderful supporting cast coming in that's taking the show to new places," Helberg gushes. "It's so fun to explore the expansion of the characters. You're get to see the new chapters of their lives play out instead of assuming where they went or forgetting about them after a series ends too soon."

If longevity, something not often found in Hollywood, as well as an innate ability to capture an audience with hilarious aplomb is a recipe for success, we can only imagine that Simon Helberg will be making us laugh for the long run.



I'm not just a fan of Jonathan Tucker's undeniable acting chops and his knack for picking complex and dynamic roles, from his stints on *Parenthood* and *Justified* to his strenuously physical starring role in *Kingdom*. I'm not just a fan—I also happen to basically be his doppelganger... you know, minus the fame and the cool acting job.

JT and I are both from the Boston area, we both have Jewish mothers and semi-Catholic fathers. We're both married and have small dogs with handsome underbites, and we both took to ballet as children, even though I was kicked out of my first class for trying to play the piano. Jonathan Tucker, however, would never get kicked out of a class. Jonathan Tucker would obsess over the class and the content matter, throwing himself fearlessly into whatever it was that piqued his interest at that particular moment. Jonathan Tucker is an absolute master chameleon, constantly changing and challenging himself to get to that next level, to become that next character.

I had the chance to catch up with him on the phone as he sat in his Crown Victoria outside of his gym, a place that he goes to turn himself into MMA fighter Jay Kulina for Kingdom. Though he was never a fan of MMA before started filming, he has become close to the MMA community and has embraced the sport while soul-searching for his character. And his enthusiasm is contagious: After our interview, I found myself googling MMA and falling into an Internet rabbit hole learning about the sport, curiosity sparked by his glowing enthusiasm. Tucker's enjoyment in peeling the layers back and exploring the complexities of life puts him in a true place of power. To risk-take and be able to walk into a world you are unfamiliar with and approach it from a place of vulnerability is a feat. And it's precisely in this process that the actor feels the most comfortable and finds his power.

What made you want to explore dance, especially being a boy learning what is stereotypes as a women-dominated art form?
The New York City Ballet had a place called the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, and there was a bakery in upstate New York called Fly Hoppers. It was sort of a local company and they would pay for any senior citizen and kid under 12 to go to the New York City Ballet and you could sit on the lawn for free. My grandmother would take me every night in the summer to see one of the greatest ballet companies in the world and I really fell in love with the art, the discipline, the whole experience of the stage and I became kind of a ballet 'groupie,' you know, getting their autographs and their shoes and programs signed. And my role models were some of these ultra masculine, extraordinarily physically dynamic dancers. Jock Soto was an ultra masculine force. I remember someone putting on a questionnaire when I was 10: Who is your role model? And I said Jock Soto.

So I became obsessed with ballet in the same way that I become obsessed with anything—I love to really drill into things and find more layers, whether it is urban or or contemporary art or classic automobiles like my beautiful Crown Victoria or boxing or acting. Losing myself in something really interests me and ballet was really one of the first things that was like that for me. SoI came back to Boston and told my parents that I wanted to be in a real ballet class...And it helped me in my transition into acting. It taught me discipline, the ability to take directions, and of course the physicality and the ability to be comfortable in front of a group of people.

Kind of like the physicality that you have to tap into in *Kingdom*?
I believe every role is physical. If you are not bringing physicality to your role as an actor you are short-changing the character. *Kingdom* happens to be a very obvious example of that but I don't consider that role to be any more physical than my character on *Justified* or my role on *American Gods*.
And then you transitioned into acting. When you imagined your acting career when you were starting out, what types of genres were you attracted to?
I think I was maybe 11 when I started acting, and there was overlap with ballet but I started doing national commercials out of Boston. The genres that I was interested in then were really the same as the genres I am interested in now. It's less about the genre and more about the character and interesting directors and storytellers and the collaborations that one can find with other actors and the people that are bringing something to the story. As I have gotten older I have seen how collaborative my process can be with someone I did not know about when I was younger, like a production designer or a wardrobe designer. There are a lot of storytellers that bring their talents to the filmmaking process and I've had the privilege of discovering that we can all work together and make something bigger than ourselves.
When you started out acting, I imagine it must have been difficult going to auditions and basically competing against all of the other emerging actors. What did you do to pump yourself up before auditions?
I have never really felt as competitive with other actors as I was with myself. The way I pump myself up is by preparing as thoroughly and as diligently as possible so when I end up meeting for a role I am completely and utterly open and free to that environment, and that environment is multi-dimensional. Doubt only creeps in when you are not working.
You also did a bunch of guest starring on TV shows. What were some of your favorite gigs for TV?
The guest star work was critical in allowing me to really find myself as an actor who understands how the process works and to implement all the work I've done on a set that is moving 115 MPH and doesn't really care how fast you are stepping onto that moving platform. It allows you to cut your teeth, so to speak. It gives you the opportunity to create a complex character and bring life to a story for one episode where the time-frame is so limited...

Two shows I really enjoyed were *Parenthood* and *Justified*. But doing *Hannibal* was one of those pivotal times for me because though Bryan Fuller and I had many discussions about a particular element, he wasn't on set when I had implemented it and people were nervous about what I was doing. I just had to believe that we are there to operate as artists and we have to listen to our own sense of truth and our own creative source, and so this situation playing out successfully...really empowered me.You can't allow other people's feedback to dictate your sense of self worth or your artistic integrity. If you have done the work, you need to let that speak.
I love that! Let's talk about *Kingdom*. I read that before you took on the role of Jay you weren't an MMA fan but now you are. Are there any other ways that this role has changed you?
As an actor, as much as you give to a character, a character gives back to you. My understanding of addiction, family, my appreciation for the unconditional love that my parents gave me... all of those things have really come into play. I travel with my combat gear whenever I go somewhere for a weekend like someone might travel with a golf bag. I think the spiritual component is much more interesting to me: He's such a complex, tragic and dynamic character and there's almost never too far for him to go in one direction...and that's been very gratifying to experience; that kind of liberation as a character, actor and person.
I heard you had to physically transform yourself for the role. Did you find power in being "bigger" for this role? How did the transformation affect your sense of self?
I think I found less power in the physical appearance and more potency in what it took to get there. When you understand the self discipline that's required to achieve a certain goal, like this one for instance, and you're able to ask more of yourself than you've ever asked, to set a bar that you're not sure you're going to reach and to reach it...that's where real self-confidence comes from. And self-awareness too. Because it's a big dance between your ego and your heart and your sense of self and determination.
The press are saying that your next project, 2017's *American Gods*, might be the next *Game of Thrones*. Were you a fan of the book before you signed onto the project?
I knew the book and I knew it had a legion of fans and I wish I could tell you that I was one. I am a Bryan Fuller worshipper and I am simply moved to find myself in any world that he creates or is a part of. That was really my main attraction. And of course, I had the opportunity to read the book and meet the fans and I understood the responsibility I had in making this adaptation work for them and Neil Gaiman.
What genre of music, and also specifically which artists or songs, really get you pumped up?
This is going to sound insane but... my mom is Jewish, my father is a recovering Irish Catholic, my wife's family is Muslim and Hindu, and I end up listening to a ton of Christian worship songs when I go to the gym! For some reason I find them incredibly inspiring. It goes between that and like, Kanye West and Avicii. I have the most disgusting, diverse, and wildly different songs that get me to where I need to get to.
What are you absolutely powerless over?
Dark chocolate peanut butter cups are out of this world...They allow me to understand people's drug addictions! And waking up next to my bride and Rothko, our twelve pound rescue mutt who was found in a trash can in downtown Los Angeles... Seeing him snuggled up like a fur stole around her neck is more potent than a morning cup of coffee.
That's beautiful! I already asked you this as it pertains to your work, but is there any saying, memory, TV show, song or quote that when you're feeling down makes you feel empowered?
There's a quotation in my bathroom—it's the only quotation that I have—and I keep it there so I can see it when I brush my teeth. It's by WIlliam Blake: "Great things happen when men and mountains meet." And that's a really important thing for me to know. Everything is relative—there is always someone making more money, getting more offers, who is seemingly getting more, and you have to be comfortable with where you are in your life which doesn't mean you can't be working hard at the same time. But knowing this has been critical for me to recognize every single day that I have been lucky to work as an actor. You can't see the view from the top of the peak unless you've crawled in the lowest parts of the valley.

DANIEL SAYNT & BECA ALEXANDER:
A NEW BREED OF SOCIALYTE

STORY / ALYSSA HARDY

PHOTOS / JENA CUMBO



If you consider the most unique phenomena of the millennium, bloggers are right on top. Those who had the foresight to recognize its cultural relevance back then are now, ten years later, household names. This wasn't an accident, of course, because entrepreneurs like Daniel Saynt and Beca Alexander saw this burst as an opportunity to create a landmark business to help bloggers siphon their influence into mini empires.

The formerly married couple (we'll get back to that in a moment) run their company, *Socialyte*, out of the Manhattan *NYLON* magazine headquarters they took ownership of in 2014. Alexander recalls the early days of their company: "When we started dating we very much connected on this vision of becoming entrepreneurs, of owning something—of making a mark [and] really creating something that would have an impact on some facet of the fashion industry. We were both very passionate about it."

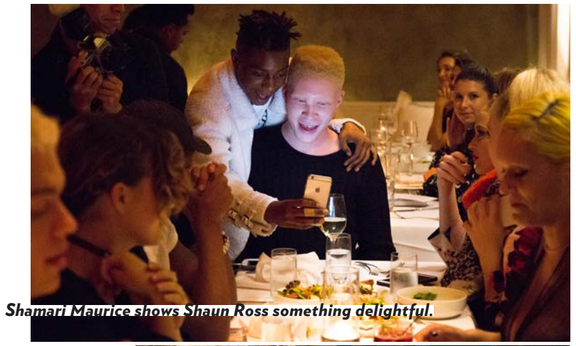
"We were both just really great business partners, we really worked well together," Saynt adds. The two are divorced, but you would never know it. In fact, sitting down with them all I can sense is playfulness and love. Despite their technically broken marriage, they have a bond that allows them to run a company that has helped dozens of women to achieve six-figure careers.

"Funny enough, Daniel is the only guy in our office. It's literally all girls in their mid to late 20s. We empower them, they know they can make great business decisions," Alexander says.

"The structure of our team is really designed to be where they all have their own little businesses. Just like our talent," Saynt chimes in.

"One of our talents just hit her million dollar mark," Alexander reveals. "So she has made a million dollars since she first started full-time blogging. It's incredible to see and you see all of these people who have sort of taken charge of their own lives and with dedication and with strive and determination."

To claim these two are at the forefront of media's future is an understatement. In fact, in the early days of their business people used to cheekily call them The Blog Father and The Fairy Blog Mother. Today, they are purveyors of all things Internet-related, even talking about their big ideas for micro-blogging (small scale influencers). They have created an innovative demand in a growing market, something they have perfected. Their own mantra describes what they do perfectly: "Why hire a model when you can hire a model with an influence? Why hire a photographer or stylist or any type of talent when you can hire someone who can take it a step further?"



Shamari Maurice shows Shaun Ross something delightful.



Shaun Ross x Lauren Jauregui.



Alyssa Hardy x Lauren Servideo



Marta Pozzan x Larsen Thompson x Brittany Hampton

#NYFW GUESS LADYGUNN DINNER AT FIG & OLIVE

It was the best of times AND the best of times at Fig & Olive at the LADYGUNN X GUESS Jeans #NYFW dinner for our muses and friends to celebrate the joy of fashion week. Our friends Larsen Thompson and Shaun Ross hosted a soirée attended by a glam squad of our beautiful friends decked out in Guess Jeans apparel. We all dined on a smörgåsbord of delicious morsels and tasty drinks and told secrets that will never leave the Meatpacking District. It was a time to kick off your heels and get glamorous and that's exactly what we did. Shop their looks at shop.guess.com.

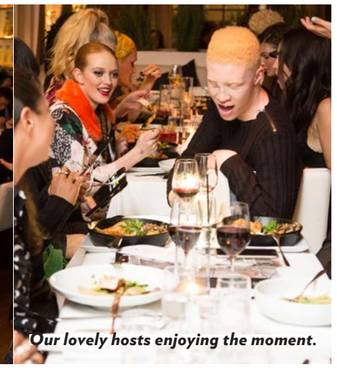
photos / Jena Cumbo



Joel Mignott x Shamari Maurice



Larsen Thompson x Shamari Maurice



Our lovely hosts enjoying the moment.



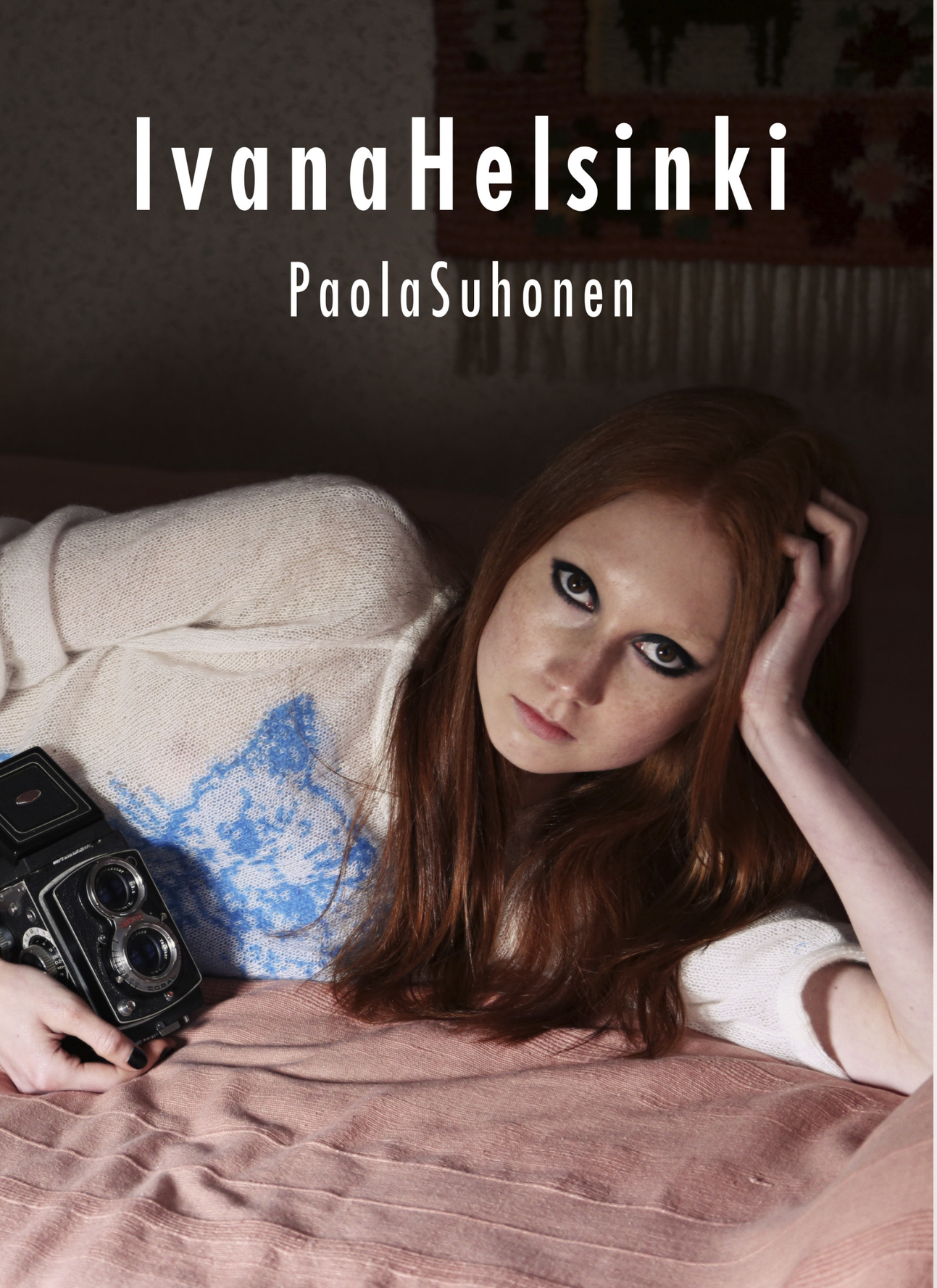
Loren Gray



Jamila Velazquez and Lauren Jauregui being perfect.

IvanaHelsinki

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THE RUNAWAYS

PHOTOS / RACHEL THÁLIA FISHER ASSISTANT / MARCY AYRES STYLING / ALEXIS BERGENS HAIR / SARAH DOUGHERTY
MAKEUP / CRYSTAL LIZ MODELS / CAROLINE WILSON @ 2M ANNIE MONTGOMERY @ PHOTOGENICS





ANNIE. DRESS, FOREVER PARIS. EARRINGS, MISHKA PIAF. SHOES, SARA MELISSA . CAROLINE. DRESS, FOREVER PARIS. EARRINGS, MISHKA PIAF SHOES, SARA MELISSA. GLOVES, STYLIST OWN.

ANNIE: SUIT, MIAU BY CLARA ROTESCU.
TOP, BOWENERO.SHOES, SARA MELISSA.
CAROLINE:DRESS, DODO BAR OR.

CAROLINE: DRESS, MIAU BY CLARA ROTESCU. EARRINGS, MISHKA PIAF. BOOTS: PSKAUFMAN
ANNIE: DRESS, MIAU BY CLARA ROTESCU. EARRINGS, MISHKA PIAF. BOOTS, PSKAUFMAN.

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