

LADYGUNN

ISSUE NO.18 / 2019

EXPLORE



Alison Brie



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LADYGUNN X NO.18

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- GIDEON ADLON
- JANE LEVY
- ASHER ANGEL
- BRANDI QUINONES
- RODEO A GO GO

A DEEP DIVE INSIDE...

2019 has been a hell of a year for me in more ways than I ever thought I could imagine. I've had to explore the strength, fear, sadness, and hope bristled deep within me, seemingly growing like vines around every gut-wrenching scenario.

First of all my husband almost died. We went to Nigeria for my little sister's wedding. What was supposed to be an international love affair ended up being the precursor for the single worst experience of my life.

Two weeks upon our return, Magnus was diagnosed with cerebral malaria which left him comatose in the ICU for two weeks and toeing the fine line between life and death. Fun fact: mosquitos are the world's most deadly animal.

He is fine now thanks to insurance, an amazing care team, prayers and family, but seeing the love of your life with tubes in his mouth, laying in a hospital bed you don't know when he will rise from, really makes you put things into perspective.

I could get into seconds and thirds but the details of my strife would hold no bearings to the lessons learned.

For instance, I am a strong ass bitch. This fierce monster of myself emerged when things began to crack in two and the yolks of my soul were left in a pool around me. I persisted, I prayed, I held myself upright through all of the tribulations this year had to offer with a strong grace I didn't recognize in myself, in ways that I admired in myself.

The thing is I never had to be strong before. My upbringing and experiences to this point have been with allowances afforded to me by a middle-class upbringing, college education and support system that allowed me to explore all of life's mosaic moments with a long bungee cord that could always bring me back up. To be able to reflect on such a life is a luxury that gets discombobulated with the airs of social media.

Exploring the inner workings of myself has been a hard and long journey that I have been on for years. There have been a lot of things that brought out sides of me that I never knew existed, both good and bad. It's all led me to where I am now, pioneering a life that fulfills my deepest being. I deserve that. We all do.

I'll be honest. I'm not sure how to get there, hell, I don't even know where to start, but trusting myself will be the first North Star on this journey. If I can live my life knowing that I explored the magic that guided me from within I know you can too.

Good luck on that adventure my darlings.

yo xo / co / co

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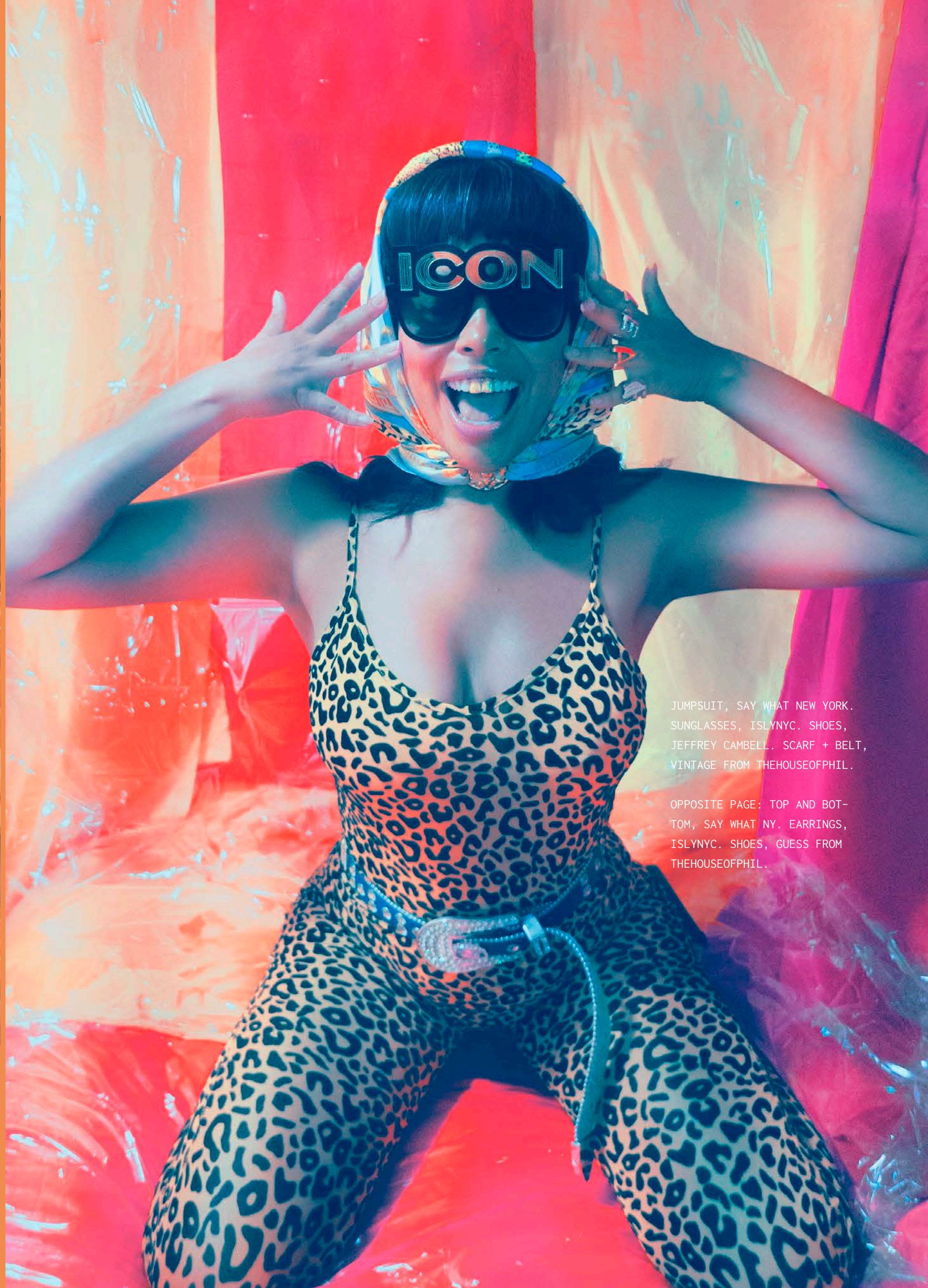
LEAF

LIVING LOUD



PHOTOS / JENNIFER MEDINA
STYLING / STYLED BY PHIL
MAKEUP / AMY KATE

Leaf is more than just a rapper. The music fatale is an icon in the making inspiring everything from viral Instagram captions to Generation Z culture and attitude. She is the epitome of "Say What You Want, Wear What You Want." The Leaf attitude is a mood in both aesthetic and attitude, a new-age reimagining what it's like to own the skin that you are in.



JUMPSUIT, SAY WHAT NEW YORK.
SUNGLASSES, ISLYNYC. SHOES,
JEFFREY CAMPBELL. SCARF + BELT,
VINTAGE FROM THEHOUSEOFFHIL.

OPPOSITE PAGE: TOP AND BOT-
TOM, SAY WHAT NY. EARRINGS,
ISLYNYC. SHOES, GUESS FROM
THEHOUSEOFFHIL.

DRESS AND FUR, SAY WHAT NY.
BELT, THEHOUSEOFFHIL.
OPPOSITE PAGE: DRESS, SAY WHAT
NY.SHOE, BETSY JOHNSON FROM
THEHOUSEOFFHIL.

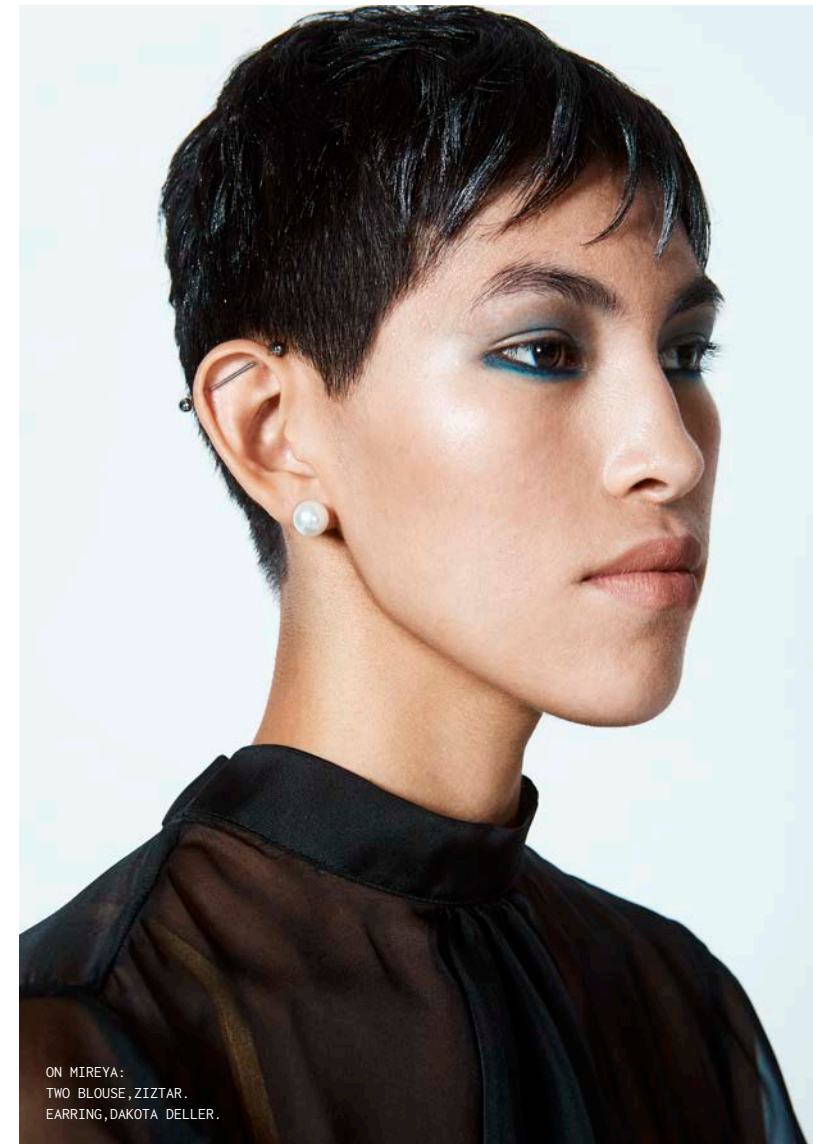


ON MAHOGANY:
DRESS, ZIZTAR.
EARRINGS , TOYSHOP.

INTER GALACTIC

PHOTOS / MARTIN RUSCH
STYLING / ALVIN STILLWELL
MAKE UP / MICHAL COHEN
MAKEUP ASSISTANT / JORDAN HURST
HAIR / KARINA VEGA

MODELS: MAHOGANY @ IMG, MIREYA @ TWO, KUNLE @ IMG, TORIN @ FREEDOM,
KELLY @ FREEDOM, SYETA @ NEXT, SHAMAN @ NEXT, TRAY @ NEXT, DAGSEN @ IMG



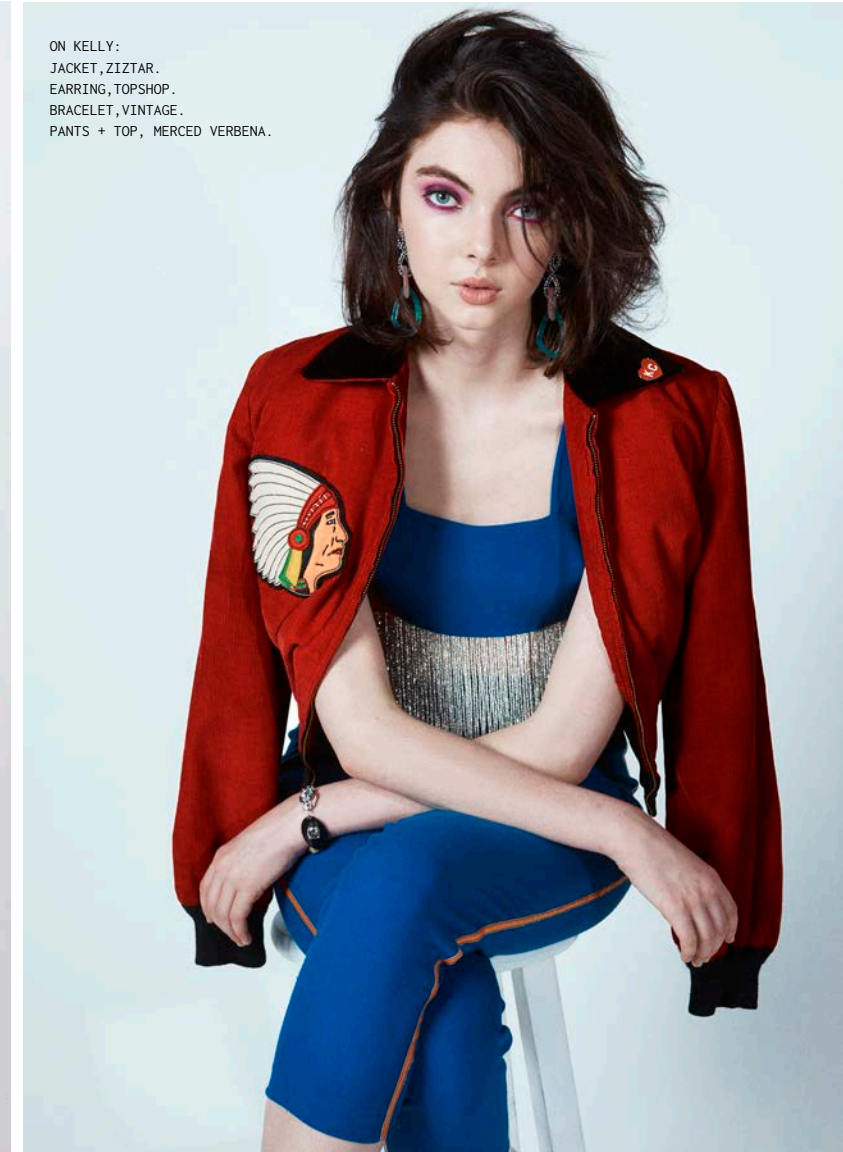
ON MIREYA:
TWO BLOUSE, ZIZTAR.
EARRING, DAKOTA DELLER.



ON TORIN:
JACKET, TOPSHOP.
EARRING, VINTAGE.

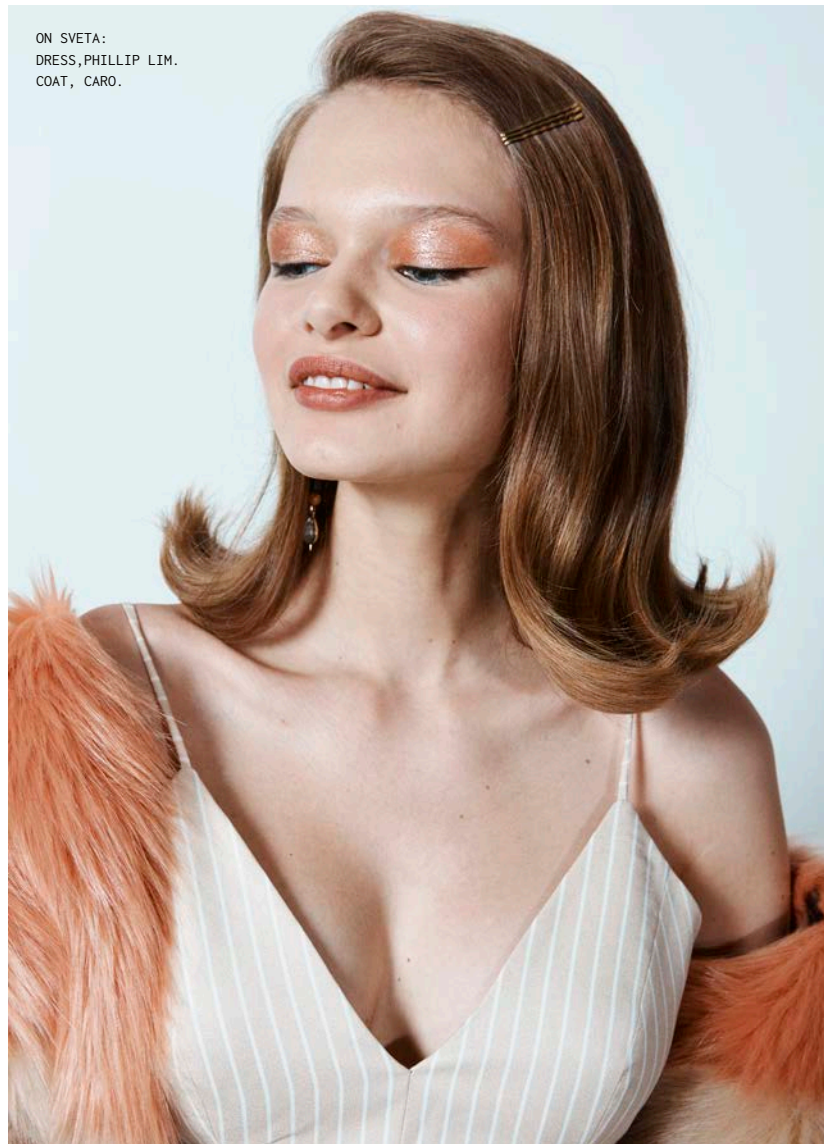


ON KUNLE: CAP, CHAMPION.
BACKPACK, NAMIBIAN MARKET.
SHIRT, VINTAGE.
SHORTS, SOUTH AFRICAN MARKET.



ON KELLY:
JACKET, ZIZTAR.
EARRING, TOPSHOP.
BRACELET, VINTAGE.
PANTS + TOP, MERCED VERBENA.

ON SVETA:
DRESS, PHILLIP LIM.
COAT, CARO.



ON SHAMAN:
ANORAK, BRAYDON ALEXANDER.
VEST, BOHEMIAN SOCIETY.



ON TRAY:
JACKET + PANTS, ACNE.
SHIRT, G STAR.
CAP, LISBON MARKET.



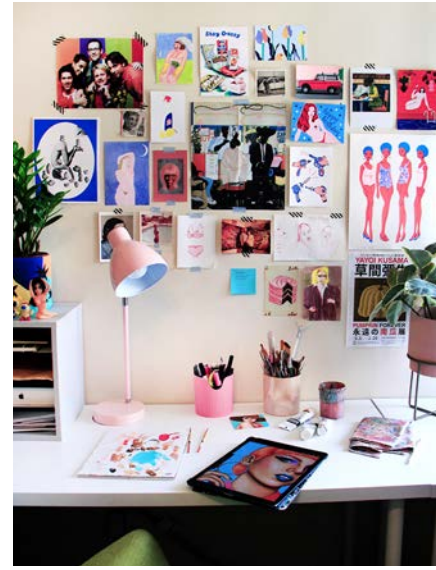
ON DAGSEN:
TRACKSUIT, AYA BY DK.
CHAIN, STYLIST OWN.
SUNGLASSES, VINTAGE.



FIAT LUX SF

fiatluxsf.com





JULIETTE TOMA

STORY / BRYANNA DOE





The two words that best describe Juliette Toma's illustrations are also fitting of the artist herself: vibrant and quirky. "My favorite things to paint," Juliette says, "are people, pop culture, and food. I'm a sucker for things that are bright, bold, and shamelessly themselves. I like to draw people that have something unique about their features and aren't too perfect." Juliette's ability to find the beauty in imperfection is apparent in her illustrations. Her portraits border on caricatures of their subjects, but are never cruel or mocking. Instead Juliette renders their flaws with loving detail, appreciating the weirdness to be found in others just as she tries to appreciate her own quirks and insecurities. "I've always considered myself shy and socially awkward," says Juliette. "Instead of dwelling on my insecurities I choose to celebrate them in artwork. The characters I paint are the badass confident people I always wished I was. They have pimples and braces, but they wear them like the latest fashion trend. I hope people can see bits of themselves in my paintings, hopefully laugh a bit, and then feel less alone."

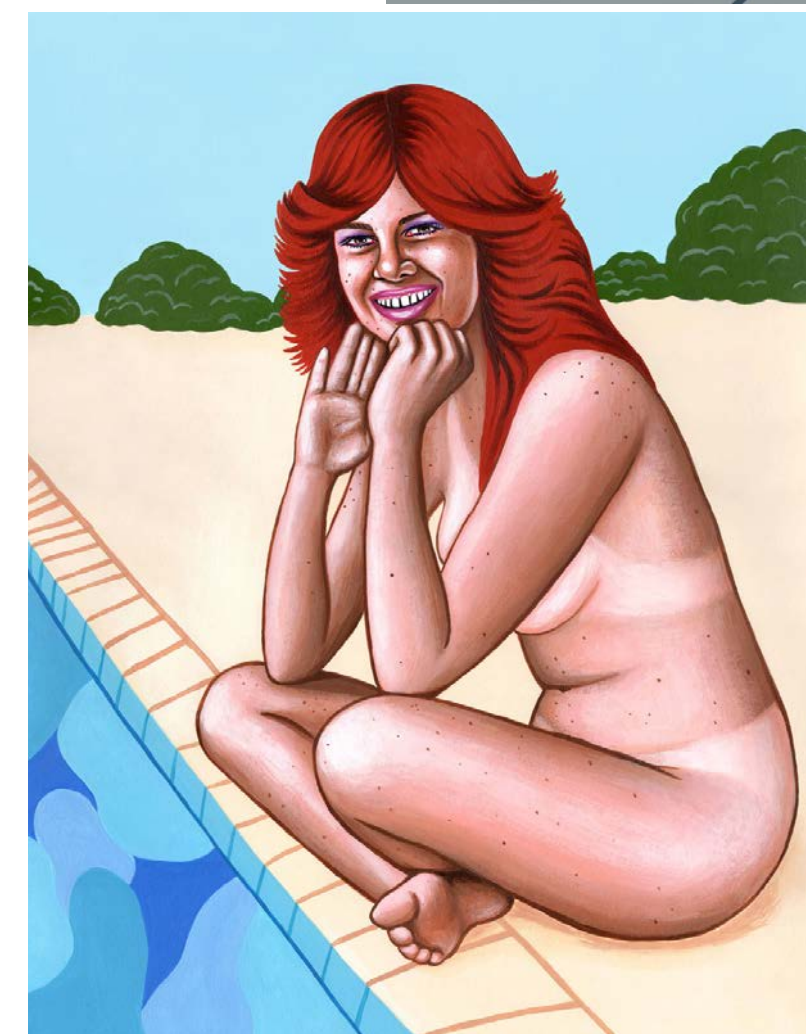
Juliette's illustrated characters have a striking, lifelike quality to them—most look as though they have bigger stories than just the moment we see immortalized by the artist. Though she doesn't make up stories about her characters, Juliette admits that their personalities begin to develop when she starts painting them. Reminiscing about her early days as an artist, Juliette shares that she once had a whole sketchbook of stories that started with a drawing of a girl. "The next page was a girl that I wrote was her sister," says Juliette. "The next page I drew her best friend, and then the school art club. I ended up with a whole sketchbook of a fictional middle school filled with people and different relationships to each other. I definitely think I still have an interest in creating stories about people," she adds, "But now it's just more subconscious."

Juliette hopes that her art is sending a message. She states that she is particularly inspired by strong, bold women like punk rockers Le Tigre and Sleater-Kinney. Of these role models, Juliette says "They gave me the inspiration to be myself and now I channel that into my work by portraying different beauty ideals. I want to make girls feel empowered in a way I felt was lacking growing up. I want them to feel beautiful and special because of who they are and embrace their differences and what makes them unique." Juliette also recalls early inspiration found in her older sister's Bust magazines. "In the back of the issues there was a comic called "Unlovable" by Esther Pearl Watson. The comic is about a teenage girl in the 80's and her diary entries. It explores all the hilariously painful things teenagers go through. I realized the feeling I had when reading the comic was what I wanted people to feel when they saw my work," says Juliette.

She cites her favorite thing to listen to while creating, The Mortified Podcast, as another work that expresses the same message she is trying to share. "If I'm ever feeling sad or anxious, I'll put on Mortified and it will instantly make me feel better," Juliette says. "Adults read their diaries from when they were younger and it is usually hilarious. The show ends every episode by reminding us that we are freaks, we are fragile, and we all survived. The show does what I want to do with my work. Laugh at embarrassing things you once thought were the end of the world." Expanding further on this message, Juliette states that she wants her art to say, "Be yourself! Embrace your differences, flaws and unique quirks! Don't take yourself too seriously and have fun!"

But even with this positive outlook, Juliette admits that it can be difficult to fight the urge to compare herself to other artists on the internet. "When everyone is putting their best foot forward online, I often find myself thinking my work isn't as good, or I will never be as successful. It can be hard to stay confident and not let your doubts and insecurities get in the way," says Juliette. Nonetheless, she notes that she's succeeded in finding her voice as an artist and that as she continues to illustrate, her voice and what she wants to communicate grows stronger. "I definitely feel like my work will continue to evolve, but the work I am making now feels the most true to myself and my personality," Juliette says.

On the horizon, Juliette will soon be releasing a collaboration with fashion label Big Bud Press, and a series of illustrations for famed department store Harrods. The Los Angeles-based artist has a growing internet following, where her work can be found via Instagram handle @drooliette or at her website, juliettetoma.com.





Alice Bag, Staud.
Daphne Beaded Flats, Gebede.
Wide Leg Pants, Greta Constantine.
Gold Bracelet, Catherine Stein.
Gold Ring, Solomeina.



EXCESS ACCESS

PHOTOS / TIMOTHY SMITH
STYLING + CREATIVE DIRECTOR / RAVEN ROBERTS
MAKEUP / TARA LAUREN USING MAC COSMETICS
HAIR / KARL T PAYTON
MODEL / TAYLOR GREENE @ NEW YORK MODELS



Pandora Bag, mlouye.



Silver Statement Earrings, Iza.
Crystal Necklace, Carol Duplaise.
White Bra Top, Georgine.



Studded Bow Heels, Sebastian.



Rain Earrings, Deepa by Deepa Gurnani.
Acme Top, Staud.

GROWN UP KIDS

PHOTOS / STEPHANIE BASSOS
STYLING / LAURA GORDON
MODELS / EVELINA + KAROLINA KAMINSKA
STORY / AUNTIE KOKO

A child's exploration of the world is like nothing else. Everything is a new horizon, uncharted territory and a stone left to unturn. Watching my five-year-old nieces, Kaya and Eva, grow up has been one of the biggest honors of my life. They are fraternal twins, as distinct in personalities as the term applies, yet the bond of sisterhood they share is unparalleled. I sat them down, for the literally two minutes they would be still, to ask them some questions about life and their future as explorers of the world.

What do you want to be when you grow up girls?

Kaya: A dermatologist.

What does a dermatologist do?

Eva: It checks people. I want to be what mommy is.

What do you girls like to explore these days?

Eva: I like exploring rainbows.

Kaya: I like donuts, hearts, numbers and circles, hexagons, triangles and squares.

What do you like about being a kid?

Eva: I love everything except for the bad stuff that we can't say.

Kaya: I just like mommy.

How do you think you will be when u are a grown-up?

Eva: I'm gonna be just like mommy.

Both girls randomly: "Siri play "Go Cubs Go" by Steve Goodman!"



Dress + Shoes, Cloina Store.



Feather Top, Isabel Benenato.
Hat, Cloina Store.
Fur Bracelet, Sarah Shikama.

“I like exploring **rainbows.**”



Valencia is a 19 year old artist balancing work and college. Teresa, 37, is a civil rights attorney advocating for victims of wrongful death cases against the police. Justin, 28 years old, is an aspiring inspirational speaker, while Dorean, 32, is a photographer who recently started a podcast on the joys and community surrounding cannabis. What connects them is not only a tangible brilliance, but also an experience that links almost half a million young people living across the US today – that is being part of, or formerly part of, our country’s youth foster care system.

During our interviews we begin to understand that at times the details of life within the foster care system can overlap: experiences of moving from one foster family to another, feelings of uncertainty, the sort of quickly acquired independence that is a necessary means for survival and growth. Indeed, the stories take the unique shape of the person involved, always. Though we find through these narratives deep insight on a flawed system, and a bold, unique vision for building life beyond being a ward of the state.

As we continue to imagine how to transform our government and our world; these dynamic leaders and advocates dare to dream of one that might include all of us, not just some of us. The insights of this group of changemakers, connected by a history of time spent within a complicated system bring with them important reminders, that it’s not our past or present that defines us, but our intentionality when looking toward the future.

Life After Foster Care

The following are portraits of former foster youth in settings that represent who they are and their advice to current foster youth.

In collaboration with Haven of Hope, First Place for Youth + Ticket to Dream

Photography • María del Río, Art Direction • Danielle Moore, Wardrobe • Amy Soderlind, Prop Stylist • Kaylan George, Hair • Sara Chestnutt-Fry, Makeup • Janet Mariscal, Production • Lola Creative Agency, Writer • A-lan A. Holt

(Opposite) Charvette, Service Unit Manager at Kaiser Permanente



“Own all the experiences that you’ve had in your childhood, whether good or bad. Look at them in a way where you can learn the right lessons from them. An important lesson that I had to learn was not to compare my life to others and to really focus on my goals. How I was going to achieve those goals? Look at your life through your own lens and decide what you want to accomplish and what you’re capable of and...

**don’t let your
circumstances
or your
childhood
define
who you are.”**

“I was referred to First Place for Youth where I would be in a position to obtain my own place if I followed all the requirements. A month before I gave birth to my son Brandon, I moved into my first

place. I can't put into words the feeling that I felt when I inserted the keys into the doorknob and walked in. For once in my life, I felt like I did know [stability]. I had control of my future ...

I was about to be a young mother



Kenzo Shirt, Yoli & Otis Skirt, Stylist's Own Jacket
Nikki Chasin Dress from LePoint, Tibi Green Dress from LePoint, Leigh Miller Earrings



Sasquatchfabrix Tie-Dye Cotton T-Shirt + Manpower Paper Bag Waist Trousers,
Stella McCartney Rover Patchwork Print Cotton Shirt, Nike Shoes

and I was going to create a better future for my son.”

– Angelica, 34, Career Development Specialist, Advice: Seek stability

Son Brandon + Daughter Akira

Rachel Comey Top from McMullen, Whit Trousers, Miista Shoes
from McMullen, Tibi Coat from McMullen, Trine Truxen Earrings



“For the youth that are going to be aging out you’ve got to be realistic about what’s going to happen. It can’t come to you as a surprise; it’s going to happen, and you got to have a plan.”

– Teresa, 37, Civil Rights Attorney, Advice: You’ve got to have a plan.

“When you turn 18... you’re going to pretty much be on your own. You have to find these resources or these programs that will be able to support you. Have the mindset that, ‘I need to make it on my own; I need to be able to figure it out.’ There will be support along the way, but you have to be willing to take on the fight. I knew that going to college, I would be able to at least stay in a dorm for the next four years. And then I’ll figure it out after that, or at least I’ll be in a much better position than I am now.”



“I want to be

“I like art. I painted this watercolor of a lion roaring. I picked a lion because throughout many different cultures and religions it symbolizes strength and dignity. That’s what I want to be like.



– Valencia, 19

Sales Associate + Student

Advice:

Find your passion.

That’s who I want to be. I want to be just like that lion. I haven’t had a lot of strength throughout the years. [Art is] something that’s pulled me through a lot of stuff I’ve been through.”

just like that lion.”



Whit Poppy Dress, Ganni Organza Jacket from LePoint,
Jacquemus Shoes from McMullen, Leigh Miller Earrings, Cult Gia Bag



“I’ve had to learn to just unlock the door to my heart ... just let it pour out because there’s a lot of love inside of us and we’re really good people and we do really, really incredible, unfathomable things, and that’s the light that beams in all of us.

It shines into everybody.

If it wasn’t for the struggle that I’ve been through, I wouldn’t have tried so hard to do the impossible and do what isn’t expected of me. You just have to weather the storm and plant yourself on a good foundation, surround yourself with only quality people and support, love, and that everything else is going to take care of itself.”

**“Change your cards,
you’re dealt a hand,
change your hand.
Don’t fold your hand.”**

– Justin, 28, Student + Bartender, Advice: Vulnerability is a super power.

“When I started advocating

“I love advocating for people. I have advocated for many people to come to our program [Haven of Hope]. I never used to



– Angelina, 19
Sales Associate

Advice: Advocate for
yourself and others

want to have to ask for anything, but over time I learned that if I didn't, nothing could be done [to get me what I needed].”

I started helping me and other people.”



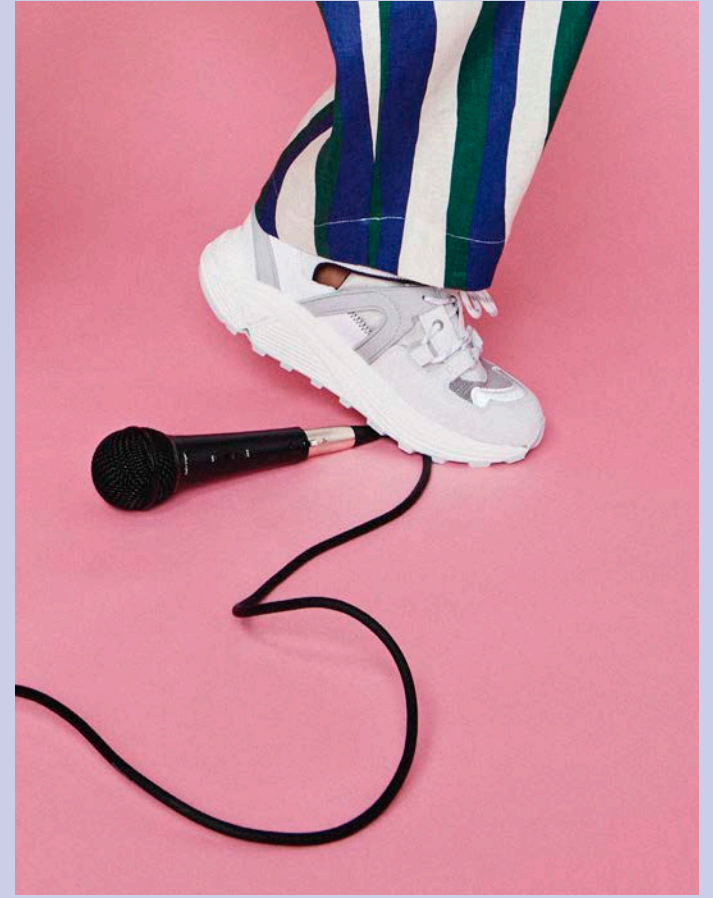
Kemperett Sheer Fuchsia Dress from LePoint,
Pferdgarten Blue floating Jacket from McMullen,
Vintage Levi's, Jacquemus Sneakers from McMullen



“Everything is going to be okay. That’s my literal mantra. Everything will be okay. Keep going through it and doing it in the most healing way for yourself.”

– Dorean, 32, Photographer + Podcaster, Advice: Don’t give up.

“Participate in self-care, look out for the things that will help make you heal from experiences. We are all stronger than we ever would’ve thought that we could be. Our entire existence, even being here, means that you are strong.”



NASTY CHERRY

PHOTOS + EDITING / ANDREW T. WHITE
STYLING + CREATIVE DIRECTION / SAM BATES
MAKEUP / TONY TULVE USING FLUID BEAUTY + STARLINA
PHOTOGRAPHY ASSISTANT / OWEN BENFIELD
SET CREATED BY INDIE STUDIOS
STORY / ERICA RUSSELL

Featuring model Gabbriette Bechtel on lead vocals, Charli XCX live drummer Debbie Knox-Hewson on drums, Kitten frontwoman Chloe Chaidez on guitar, and set decorator Georgia Somary on bass, Nasty Cherry are a who's who of diverse It Girl power players. Signed to Charli XCX's label, Vroom Vroom Recordings, the alt-pop group was conceptualized and A&R'd by the pop heavyweight in 2018.

"She had this idea a long time ago, about putting her friends together to make an all-girl band that actually played instruments," Gabbriette shares of Charli's involvement in their formation. "We all knew her at different points in her life. She brought us together to make music and, at the time, none of us even knew each other that well. She's a curator in that way."

Charli maintains a deeply collaborative relationship with Nasty Cherry, helping them with promotion and even co-writing on some of their songs. "She's very much like a pop artist fairy godmother," Georgia quips. "We all respect her. She also has such a great ear and eye, so we all look to her."

Adds Gabbriette, "She's always told us to be absolutely and completely ourselves all the time. To listen to each other and not be afraid to speak up—even argue if there's something we really believe in, but come together in the end. She's also helped us by showing us the way she writes. I think we've all learned a lot from her about writing and how to collaborate."

On New Year's Day 2019, Nasty Cherry was introduced to the world in a way that can only be described as the epitome of group's irreverent, badass, sexy bravado: with an Instagram video of champagne being poured into two flutes balanced on Georgia's flawless bare ass in a jacuzzi.

"We thought it would be a really fun way of getting it out there," Gabbriette admits, laughing. "I don't think we thought that was going to be how we announced it, but we decided to tell the world we were a band and that was our favorite moment captured together at that point. We thought we'd share the love!"

Three months later, the band released their official debut single, "Win." The track, a delightfully cocky, glittering, Garbage-esque guitar-driven anthem about not letting shit get you down, offered a promising, instantly-catchy sonic introduction — but by then the four women had already garnered a considerable fanbase online courtesy of their mysterious social media rollout.

"It was quite mental," Georgia says of gaining a following before the band even knew when they would release their first track. "It was funny to see people commenting, 'We can't wait to hear your music!' We were like, 'We hope you like you like it! We promise we're not just putting our asses in front of your face!' You really want people to like the music when they've already been invested."

Aside from coming from four very different backgrounds and not really knowing each other before jamming together for the first time, the women of Nasty Cherry also hail from opposite sides of the pond: Gabbriette and Chloe from the U.S., Georgia and Debbie from the U.K. Their cross-cultural roots lend an expansive edge to their distinct sound, which pulls influence from hallmarks of both American and British pop and rock.

Nasty Cherry's myriad visual and musical influences are deeply apparent in the songs they've released thus far, from the '90s electro-grunge glam of "Win," to the surfy sparkle of "Live Forever," to the dreamy, lo-fi, '60s girl group shoegaze of "What Do You Like in Me." (The latter track's spooky '80s VHS tape-meets-Elvira aesthetic is not to be missed.) Luckily, the band's collective library of favorite songs helps to stimulate the ladies' creative mojo.

"Gabby's influences are always influencing me," Chloe shares. "It might not be new bands, but it's her library that's refreshing for me. I've never felt freaked out by any music reference anyone has shared!"

Plus, Gabbriette says, much of the group's influences "come from attitude and aesthetic," like Josie and the Pussycats, The Runaways, and the Spice Girls.

A DIY spirit runs heavy through Nasty Cherry's veins, whether they're using their own clothes and housewares as props in music videos ("WDY-LIM") or self-directing them ("Live Forever"). But embracing a passionate do-it-yourself attitude is part of the band's message of feminist empowerment, and allows the women freedom outside of potentially restrictive budgets or sponsorships.

"Being in a band with three other women, you've got your three biggest hype girls with you all the time," Debbie shares. "Every idea is championed to at least give it a go. That's all you need to be in a band. We hope that people see that. Anyone can start a band and start making music." Adds Georgia, "I think there's a joy in making things and not having to ask permission from someone else, especially when you have an all-female band ... You can control your stuff a bit more."

From the get-go, Nasty Cherry has largely been celebrated — and referred to — as a "girl band." While the group, whose debut EP is due out in the autumn, is indeed comprised of four women, the connotations of the "girl band" designation has left the foursome with mixed feelings. Some find the phrasing problematic; others, uplifting and intentional. "I like being referred to as a band, that feels more natural to me," Georgia admits. "I've definitely used the term 'girl band' though—some days it feels empowering, other days it feels really demeaning. I'd love for people to think of Nasty Cherry as just a band. I'd love to live in a world where we don't have to put the word 'girl' in front of that."

"There doesn't need to be any 'girl' context or whatever," Gabbriette insists. "We're working just as hard as any other bands that are all-male or mixed gender. It doesn't fucking matter."

Chloe adds that the topic is a "can of worms," but that it has lent visibility she didn't quite lean into early in her career. "In [Kitten], I'd often get asked what it felt like to be a woman in music. For years, I didn't like that question, and it's still a little irritating when you get asked over and over again. But I wasn't vocal about female empowerment throughout my teen years. Now that I'm older, I think it's really important to vocalize that you're a woman in music, that you love women who make music. I feel both ways about it."

"When you get those kinds of questions about being women in the industry and being in a girl band, I think, 'Well, is it going to be young girls reading that, wanting to know what the answer is?' At which point I don't want to be like, 'No, I just want to fit in,'" Debbie muses. "Women are great and I just want to see them make more music."

On Gabbi:
Jacket / Acne Studios
Dress / Orseund Iris
Boots / Frye

On Georgia:
Dress / Kalmanovich
Boots / Georgia's Own

On Chloe:
Top / Orseund Iris
Skirt / Orseund Iris
Shoes / Isa Tapia
Earring / Shiny Squirrel

On Debbie:
Dress / Kalmanovich
Shoes / Isa Tapia



NASTY

ICEAGE

PHOTOS / KRISTY BENJAMIN STORY / ARIANA TIBI

Copenhagen's post-punk band Ice Age have released their fourth album, *Beyondless*, tipping the hat to their past with a mature, enlightened growth. The record was produced by the band with Nis Bysted, and recorded all-analog by Mattias Glavä in Göteborg, Sweden. All tracks were played entirely by Iceage with additional performances by a horn section, including Nils Gröndhal on violin.

Sounds of emotional discord interlaced with masterful songwriting surround lead singer Elias's poetic lyrics. A rebellious fervor is splattered throughout, with horns played by Kasper Tranberg (trumpet), Lars Greve (saxophones) and Morten Jessen (trombone) that make this record a party. Visual animations accompany tracks *Catch It* and *Painkiller*, towing the line between playful and comfortably gory.

The Swedish boy band is comprised of Elias Bender Rønnefeld (vocals, lyrics), Jakob Tvilling Pless (bass), Dan Klær Nielsen (drums), Johan Wieth (guitar). They've been friends since they were kids, so I asked them what storybook characters they would be and what lessons they've learned along the way.

Read their thoughts and musings below, and keep up with the guys on Instagram.

How is this album different from previous?

It's a different head of the totem, another landmark the lives that we lead that reflects the things that we've lived through in the time of writing it. Sonically it's a leap into new territory with one foot planted in our past. Right now I'm mostly absorbed with writing on the next chapter.

What does the album art mean?

A girl in Copenhagen kindly let us look through her dead grandfather's marbling archives and we found what became the album cover. It's not so much that there is a direct meaning to it, more so that I think it looks like how the album sounds.

When were the 10 tracks written? What was the process like?

The composition happens over time, in bursts ideas get formed until you begin to see a blurry vision of something that may look like an album. I usually seclude myself close before we record and write the lyrics in one fixed period of time so to, if not create a narrative, make sure that there's a frame of mind that weaves throughout the songs. In the studio we will typically book slightly less time than we think we need, so to create an urgency where dwelling in unnecessary things such and sleep is simply not an option.

What is one thing you need to have close by when writing lyrics?

Notebooks from throughout the year will usually end up as jumping points for the beginning of a lyric. Different memories and impressions merge and juxtapose and suddenly your left with new meanings.

What gives you confidence? Any pre show rituals?

Alcohol and such can be used to drown the sorrows of having had a failed show, but nothing really helps other than getting up on another stage and getting it right the next time. I'm confident in our intent, and often those bad feelings can be channeled into a form of power.

As children, what fantasy story would you guys be a part of?

What movie? Characters in a story book? (ex. X Men, Power Rangers, house in Harry Potter, Game of Thrones, etc.)

Struwwelpeter by Heinrich Hoffman

Who has changed the most since 2008?

What is one lesson you never expected to learn from being in a band with friends?

IMOGEN HEAP

PHOTOS / ALEXANDRA ARNOLD
STORY / ERICA RUSSELL
PHOTO ASSISTANTS / SARAH GARDNER AND ARIELLE ARNOLD
SPECIAL THANKS TO SARAH GARDNER STUDIO

For some listeners, Imogen Heap conjures nostalgia for the early-to-mid-2000s, the era in which she came to prominence as one of electronic music's mightiest and most enigmatic muses. A few years after debuting with her alternative rock album *iMegaphone* in 1998, she teamed up with producer Guy Sigsworth, a longtime collaborator and friend, to form Frou Frou. In 2002, the electronic pop duo released their first and only album, *Details*. The critically acclaimed record saw commercial success two years after its release thanks to the inclusion of ambient single "Let Go" on the soundtrack to Zack Braff's 2004 film, *Garden State*.

The following year, the British singer-songwriter and producer released her sophomore solo album, *Speak for Yourself*, which leaned much more experimental and electronic than her first. The album spawned hit singles "Goodnight and Go" — later reimaged by Ariana Grande on her 2018 album, *Sweetener* — and "Hide and Seek," which was featured in a pivotal scene on smash teen drama *The O.C.* and was heavily sampled on R&B star Jason Derulo's Billboard No. 1 single, "Whatcha Say." For two decades, her music has served as a coming-of-age soundtrack for so many fans, but nostalgia be damned: Heap is not tethered to the sound of yesterday. Instead, she's determined to be the voice of tomorrow.

An independent artist frustrated with the music industry's sweeping failure to sustain and support musicians in the streaming era, in 2018 Heap announced her Creative Passport project. Nestled under the broader initiative of Mycelia, her research and development organization for music makers, Creative Passport is a digital blockchain technology application that aims to empower and enable musicians by "simplifying and democratizing collaborations," getting artists credited and paid quickly and fairly for their work.

"The big hope is that we create an integrated flow and flourishing system for the music industry," Heap explains of the project, which is currently in its grassroots stage and seeking funding. "Something that makes sense for everyone so there's no fear for where the next paycheck is going to come from, or this sense of, 'This is working for everyone else, but not for me.' We want to get rid of that."

The idea for Creative passport was sparked about four years ago when Berklee University — which coincidentally awarded Heap an honorary Doctor of Music degree in July 2019 — released a paper analyzing the state of the music industry which reported that between 20-50 percent of all music royalties don't reach their rightful earners. "With that incredible nugget of information, along with this blue sky thinking of what one musician could do to help change the industry, it now looks like we're going to be developing these thoughts further together," Heap shares excitedly.

While it will likely take Creative Passport a few years to become fully realized for users, Heap took the project on a test run in 2019 while on her Mycelia World Tour, during which she not only performed but held tech talks and workshops to introduce the application and its many potentials. "There were a lot of music services and labels who were scared of us, thinking we were going to try to flatten the music industry and burn it down and disrupt it, but that's not what we want to do," she shares.

Heap's Mycelia World Tour also saw the brief return of Frou Frou, with Sigsworth joining the artist for a handful of special performance dates. Initially inspired to reunite on stage after discussing the possibility of a much bigger tour — something which Heap refers to as an "ambitious" multi-act festival that didn't quite pan out — Frou Frou fans unfortunately shouldn't get their hopes up for a sophomore album from the two collaborators just yet, even if it has been 17 years since their first.

"I don't think we'll have an album or anything in the near future, but it's never been struck off the to-do list," Heap says sympathetically. "It was very unplanned when we began. We needed each other. We both came to a point where we were fed up with our labels, so we wanted to join forces and try something new [with Frou Frou]. But right now I'm very happy with what I'm doing and I'm really passionate about these projects. There is pressure out there, but we're respectful of each other's space and time. It's something we don't want to force. It will just come naturally and magically, and we haven't felt that just yet. I'm sure we'll get there."

As Heap continues to charge ahead with her boundary-pushing music, technologies and projects, blazing a new, clearer path for the future of musicians, she still recognizes the challenges faced by burgeoning artists today. Her advice? "There's music making and then there's making money off music making. My advice to somebody who is a music maker and just wants to make music is to just keep making music. If you need to make money off it, things are looking up. There are technologies on the horizon that are going to make it much easier and much simpler — to get rid of the noise and connect the artist with the listener much easier."

For now, she urges, "try not to lose too much hope."

"Don't be disheartened by the fact that it doesn't make sense and you can't be discovered and you think it's unfair. Because it is unfair. It is hard to navigate. You're not alone and you're not missing out on some magic trick or some secret way to make it work for yourself. What we hope is that in the next 3-5 years this question of, 'How do you make it in the music industry?' is not an issue anymore. You should be able to make the music that you want to make because that's the thing that's going to help you get discovered out there. That's what you need to focus on: your passions and skills."



SASHA

PHOTOS / LOWFIELD STYLING / CHRISTINA CISNEROS HAIR+MAKEUP / TOMOKO@JK ARTISTS STORY / MIKHAEL AGAFONOV

Halfway through her first-ever non-USA gig, inside an intimate London venue Digwalls Camden, 24-year-old singer-songwriter Sasha Sloan strips it down for "Here", a song off her debut EP "Sad Girl":

Sometimes love just disappears / No one knows where it goes / But it ain't here

By the time the song's over, the club is filled with applause while Sasha's eyes are filled with tears. The relationship she's talking about in the song may be over, but her rise as the pop's go-to sad girl is only beginning. Although in her own words, she's "a pretty normal person with anxiety who likes to do music".

Sloan still recalls the times she was working at a Coffee Bean and Toby from The Office would come in every day. "That was a cool moment in my life. Also sad", Sloan reflects while sitting in a dressing room before her London show, "Working at Coffee Bean was rough. Why are people so mean?!"

She eventually found her feet in the music industry through writing for big-league showstoppers such as Pink, Camilla Cabello, and John Legend, but her own material is raw, brutally honest and surprisingly relatable. From singing about having to go to the parties only to feel "Normal" to wistfully stating that all of her friends are "only kids but they're married now" (a feature on Kygo's "This Town"), Boston native of Russian descent is here to provide a chilly yet necessary puff of cathartic gloom.

Apparently the key to writing a perfectly dramatic song is working when the storm has already passed. "I'm having a hard time writing when I'm sad when I'm actually feeling the emotion itself. I don't have the perspective on it yet, because I'm in the moment. You need to take a step back and take a good look at it."

It's not just her name that's Russian ("Someone did tell me that it sounds like a porn star name"). Her natural knack for self-deprecation and walling in melancholy may also have to do with her Russian roots, since the country is famous for its rather depressing and multi-layered literature offerings. "When I write for other artists, it's whatever they want to say. And for my own project I was never like "I only have to write sad songs". Yet every song that I was writing that felt like me was naturally sad. I guess sad girl is just an overarching theme."

Should we ever expect her to lighten up at some point? "Rebrand to a glad girl?," she offers with a smile, "Sure. We change a million times in a lifetime. I'm okay with that and I'm not trying to make everything

super sad." She's also very into standup ("Tom Segura and Bill Burr are the best"), and wants to try it herself, but says she'd probably do it privately.

So while there are hardly full-blown laughs to be found in her songs, there's definitely a healthy dose of irony. Case in point: her second EP is called "Loser". "I always call myself a loser and a nerd. I read all of the Game of Thrones books and I love video games (The Last of Us is the best!). People tell me that I need to be more comfortable and I am, but I also just think that I'm a loser. And I'm comfortable being that". She physically owns the word, too: Sloan has the word "loser" tattooed on her body ("that's the only tattoo my mom is very sad about").

There's definitely room for love in her lyrics "I have a song called "Chasing Parties" which is about being in love and staying at home with that person and not get fucked up at a random house party anymore."

In case you didn't get that yet, let's try again: Sasha Sloan is really, really not a party girl. "The only parties that I enjoy are hosted at my house with a hookah on my coffee table and max 6 people. I like to talk, I like to hang out. I don't like to be at a loud party and not be able to hear anyone and run into people that you don't really wanna talk to. I either get so drunk while I'm there that I'm enjoying it then but I hate it the next day, 'cause I'm so hungover, or I'm way too sober to be there. It's a lose-lose situation."

So while her songs won't probably be a fitting soundtrack for your pre-gaming routine, Sasha Sloan's music can certainly inspire you to do big dramatic things. A singer recalls one time a girl approached her after a show: "She told me that once she heard "Faking It", she realized that her 8-year relationships had to end, and I was like "Oh, shit! My bad." But she said she's way happier now and wouldn't be able to do that without that song. Which was crazy."

Surprisingly, people still ask her to sing at their weddings. Sometimes she even says yes. "I played "Marry Me" by Train at my gym teacher's wedding while she walked down the aisle. I was 16 and probably terrible. We're gonna need to make sure that never sees the light of day."

She knows a few things about embarrassing online history, thanks to her very own politically-minded grandmother. "I was 12 and wrote a song called "I Miss You". Made a terrible recording of it on Garage Band. My grandma is a huge George Bush fan and I'm not. She somehow figures out how to use the internet, makes a montage of George Bush's images from Google and puts it together with my song on YouTube. With my name on it! So it looks like I made that montage. It's still out there. I honestly don't know how to take it down."

SLOAN

On Gabbi:
Jacket / Acne Studios
Dress / Orseund Iris
Boots / Frye



Top & Bottom, J. Crew.
Sneakers, Nike.

HOZIER

PHOTOS / PHILIP EDSEL
STYLING + GROOMING / ERICA GRAY
STORY / KOKO NTUEN

To my husband's annoyance, I break into song when I meet Hozier. I can't help it. His music and voice have been swirling around my head for years, long before this feature, and when I see him—a statuesque man of 6'5 on the record, tall, lanky and hiding behind a thick mane of brown waves, it just comes out.

Magnus nearly had a panic attack on our drive from San Antonio to Austin for this shoot and interview. (The whole car ride was comprised of me loudly belting out my favorites of his eponymous 2014 album Hozier, as well as his latest body of work, Wasteland Baby.)

Both albums had moved me emotionally and spiritually, but the latter had a profound effect on me politically. On lead track "Nina Cried Power" featuring Mavis Staples, Hozier pays homage to the artists of yesteryear: Nina Simone, Joni Mitchell, Billie Holiday, James Brown, Bob Dylan, Woody Guthrie, and Staples herself. It was a wake-up call from the desensitized slumber of today's political climate that I had found myself lying in, a place that made me feel helpless, burdened and insecure.

"It's not the openin' of eyes / It's not the wakin', it's the risin' / It's not the war but what's behind it," he sings on the track, lyrics which seemed to guide me out of depression and into a light I so desperately needed. It's a song for anyone who needs to rise from the shackles of life.

"Don't take this the wrong way," I croon upon seeing him. "You knew who I was every step that I ran to you..." And then, I stop, realizing that everyone in the room has the same expression on their face that Magnus has.

Andrew John Hozier-Byrne, the sweet lullaby in human form, takes it in stride. A small, bashful smile curls the sides of his mouth as he runs his large hands through his unruly brown locks.

"Is this common, that people sing your songs to you?" I ask him later.

"Not too common," he says, laughing. "But it does happen to me when I'm around musicians I know. Their songs come into my head when I'm around them and I just start singing. It's really embarrassing at the moment, like, shit."

But these moments are some of the most fulfilling parts of his music career. "I just love making songs. I love making something that someone else can sing, something that can form part of someone else's music landscape. One of the most fulfilling parts is seeing someone else sing your songs, or seeing someone cohort your work or see them singing your lyrics back at you."

In 2014, the whole world was singing his lyrics back to him with his debut track, "Take Me To Church." The song became the longest-running No. 1 in chart history at the time, was nominated for Song of

the Year at the 57th Annual Grammy Awards, and has been certified five-times Platinum in the US. It was a smash of a hit that took Hozier around the world and opened up his fandom to the masses.

When you go back to the artist's humble roots, this was a huge deal. He left college at 19 to pursue music with everything he had. "I just thought if I'm not doing this or not trying to do this to the bitter end to where I just know I can't do this anymore, I wouldn't be happy with myself," he shares. "I would hate to be doing something else and be thinking about what I would rather be doing. If I was working at an office I would be doing this as a hobby. I'm so lucky that I get to do this."

For him, the focus was a driving force to reaching his dreams.

"I think we ought to keep something in our mind's eye, something that is pointing to the horizon and keeps moving towards that," he advises.

In 2016, Hozier got off the road after touring extensively. The Doomsday Clock, a symbol created and maintained by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists since 1947, had moved forward two minutes to midnight, furthering the likelihood of a man-made global catastrophe, with nuclear escalations coming closer and closer. It felt like a weird time for Andrew, and for all of us; those fears and anxieties found their way unto his second studio album, Wasteland Baby.

Growing up in Wicklow, Ireland, his music landscape was shaped by blues, with Muddy Waters and BB King being some of the most prominent. By the time he was 10, more intense artists like Robert Johnson, Blind Willie Johnson, and Skip James had records spinning on his player. Gospel music, jazz, and soul naturally followed. This was before the internet when all he could do was revel in the libraries afforded to him by his parent's collections. "These artists were writing about having seen the world. They were putting their hearts and values were the music was. Singing about the hopes we all have for an easier world to live in."

Hozier's work has always fashioned itself in a similar way, with soulful intricate messages about society. On Wasteland Baby, he gives us both pop gospel and a cry for help at the same time: "I can only try to be honest about how I see the world. It's not always roses, it's a funny world and there is no cure for planet earth," he explains.

For Hozier, joy comes in all forms—the soft days, getting to tour playing music for people, writing songs, being surrounded by loved ones.

"I'm just thrilled that my dream is happening. Just taking stock of that brings me more happiness than most things. I try to keep things simple."



Jacket, Acne Studios.
Sweatshirt, W-Co.



LAURA DREYFUSS

PHOTOS / LUCA VENTER STYLING / OLIVIA PERDOCH STORY / CATHERINE SANTINO

The first time I saw Laura Dreyfuss perform was in the touring production of Broadway's *Hair*, at a concert hall about 20 miles outside my hometown in Upstate New York. "Schenectady?!" she exclaims when I tell her this now, over 8 years later. "We all loved that town."

I'm a bit perplexed by this, as Schenectady isn't exactly the prized jewel of New York State. But nonetheless, her excitement is endearing and it's always nice to hear someone speak kindly about the place you grew up.

Shortly after I saw *Hair*, I stumbled across audio of Dreyfuss performing "If You Want Me" in the musical *Once*, in which she was currently starring. To this day, I've never been quite so transfixed by a vocal performance. Cristin Milioti, who originated the role of Girl in *Once* on Broadway, came to be appreciated for her no-frills, singer-songwriter vocals. She's incredible, no doubt, but hearing Dreyfuss belt out the first crescendoing note was unlike anything I'd ever experienced. I knew I had to see Dreyfuss in this role, and eventually, I did.

After *Once*, Dreyfuss went on to star in Ryan Murphy's hit musical comedy *Glee*, and then, originated the role of Zoe Murphy in Broadway phenomenon *Dear Evan Hansen*. Now, she's releasing her own music for the first time, under the moniker Loladre. She released her first single, "Be Great" last year, followed up by "My Hero" and "Better Drugs".

I meet with Dreyfuss at a Manhattan coffee shop that she tells me is "the Starbucks of Colombia" (more on this later) to discuss her forthcoming dance-driven pop EP, her career thus far, and the future of musical theatre.

As someone with a theater background, did you find approaching this genre of music difficult? Did it feel like a foreign world to you?

I was somewhat familiar with the music industry before. I was doing *Dear Evan Hansen* on Broadway and it was becoming more of a routine. Even though it was a really special show, I was seeing the effect that it had on people and that was really what inspired me to want to write. Because I realized that like, 'oh, I might have something to say'. So in a weird way, theater is what made me do it.

There's so many modernized, pop-driven musicals like *Dear Evan Hansen* these days. How do you see that shaping the theatre industry?

I think that's what people ultimately want. I think there's such an appreciation for the Rodgers and Hammerstein type of musical and some of my favorite musicals are of that time. But I think we're now redefining what theatre is. And I don't want to say that there isn't a place for what it used to be, but it's just becoming a different thing. The EP is super pop-heavy and dance-y. How did you decide on that direction?

I just wanted to write music that I would want to listen to. I didn't really have a particular sound in mind. I come from more of a folk background and I grew up listening to Joni Mitchell and that's always been my foundation for music and then it was really fun because my producer [Michel Hayaca] was able to bring in the synths and stuff to make it more than I would have thought to make it.

Did you write the lyrics first and then bring that to Michel? Or did you do both together?

Pretty much everything we wrote, we wrote in the room together. The lyrics have been mostly driven from me since they're my experience. But it's also been a lot of give and take with each thing.

You said that the EP is taken from your own life experience. In "Sidelines", you talk a lot about competition maybe between friends. How do you deal with that in the industry that you're in?

I think the most important thing to do but also the hardest thing to do is to celebrate people when good things are happening for them – when bad things might be happening for you. Or good things might not be happening for you. And I think in a competitive, artistic field, it's really easy to see someone else's success as taking away from yours. Which couldn't be further from the truth. But then again, it's easier said than done. I've felt that way, I



know other people around me have felt that way. So it's a universal feeling.

It's definitely perpetuated by social media these days. It's like an epidemic, really. It's so hard to see when things go so well for everybody. But success is such a weird marker for that because you could be having everything going well for you, and you're miserable. It [success] doesn't mean you're happy.

Your moniker obviously comes from your name, but can you talk more about the decision to stylize it this way?

I think I needed to separate it for myself and for whoever's listening, just because the sound is so different from theatre and because I needed it to be very clear that this isn't representing who I am as an actor. How do you find the transition between New York and LA?

It's such a weird thing [laughs]. I feel like LA is such a weird place and I actually enjoy being there, which I don't hear a lot of New Yorkers say. I feel fortunate that I have good people there that are my people. And I love the outdoors. I love nature, I love sunshine. So I love being there.

But New York is such a wild city as well. It's funny because I find there's more of a community here, I think because like, you're all in the subway and there's some man shouting in your face and everyone's there together and you look at each other and you're like 'Been there.' There's just a collective understanding of like how hard it can be to live here, especially with artists. From following your Instagram, I know that you love traveling and nature, so I'm sure living in New York can be intense sometimes.


Yeah. It's funny, because this coffee shop is like, the Starbucks of Colombia. And the only time I've been here is in Colombia.

But yeah, travel is a huge part of my life. I love travelling alone. I also love travelling with people, but whenever you do something challenging by yourself, it strengthens a part of you.

I was so fortunate to go to Nicaragua this past winter to work with the local community and teach theatre to kids. It's been amazing to see when people realize that their dreams are valid. We're so lucky to live in a place where you're born and people tell you you can do whatever you want to do. That's so much a part of the American mentality.

Any other projects right now?

I have *The Politician* [on Netflix], which comes out in September. But I'm really focusing on music right now. I feel like I'm still recovering from *Dear Evan Hansen*. It took so much out of me. It's been really healing to just focus on music and have this time to just really write music and say what I want to say.



CITY

GIRLS



PHOTOS / DANIELLE DEFOE
STYLING / BRITTON LITOW
MAKEUP / MICHELLE PARKER
HAIR / JAYY HAIRSTYLES
ILLUSTRATIONS / SLOANE SEXTON
STORY / KOKO NTUEN

While everyone was having their version of a “hot girl” summer, Yung Miami was living a few notches above the rest having a City Girl summer. This type of summer was reserved for the rarest birds who were ready to risk it all for a good time and look back with no regrets. For Miami this included back to back number 1’s for hit singles “Twerk” and “Act Up”, BET nominations, getting “flewed” out, getting shot at by some psycho bitch while leaving a recording studio and carrying her chart-topping group through festivals and media appearances solo.

The other half of the City Girls, JT is currently in state penitentiary close to finishing her 2-year sentence for fraud. She corresponds from jail for the interview but assures me she is ok, “I’m doing really good, chilling! She says, “I stay inspired by all the features I hear that Yung Miami do!”

It’s a hot Tuesday afternoon when I talk to Miami. There is clamor all around as the pregnant artist navigates doing an interview, a toddler at her feet and having a management team and full production crew with a laser focus on her every move. She is in the middle of filming Part II of the Quality Control x Mass Appeal’s documentary Point Blank Period. Miami is a beauty in a traditional sense but also through an Instagram filtered reality. Her hair is tinted an expensive green shade, skin like half coffee half cream and her eyelashes seem to frame her large set eyes like flower petals. She looks like a Bratz doll come to life but prettier.

“You know sometimes it’s annoying, she says with a smile and her southern homegirl drawl taking in her surroundings, “ I love it though. I always wanted this life. So it’s annoying sometimes but overall I’m excited.”

The City Girls’ meteoric rise has been signed sealed and delivered by everyone from Cardi B to Lil Baby to the king of the charts Drake. Their chirpy feature on “Kiki Do You Love Me” was an unescapable viral hit that gave the girls a whole new dimension to their stardom.

“Drake cosigned the city girls. I’m not going to lie..” Miami says, “Like, Drake really gave us that exposure that we needed, like the next level first exposure. He really like took us to the next level. We never expected that. Not so bad just to be rapping like for a year to get a feature with Drake. Like, you know, that comes with time. So, when he reached out to us like, I got to work with the City Girls. We were like, we got to be dreaming or you know, somebody’s playing us. But, it was really Drake. It was like, it was God’s willing. Like, God had a plan for us. So, thankful and grateful.”

The girls seem to have wrapped the industry around their lacquer tipped fingers with their signature nonchalant sex and violence infused monologues. Easy E comes to mind when listening to their palm tree gangster raps. They only had 2 songs under their name when they got signed to Quality Control Music. Migos, Lil Yachty, Stefflon Don and Lil Baby are labelmates amongst others.

They made a career out of being themselves. Their narrative is a multi-faceted affair that brings female empowerment to the front in a risqué street smart style that revives control of their bodies, their sexuality, getting money, their desires and vulnerabilities over catchy club approved beats. I imagine Tipper Gore is hyperventilating into a paper bag while Yung Miami raps about getting a hickey on her pussy. Their music is as explicit as it is danceable.

“I’m never bothered because, at the end of the day, everybody’s entitled to their own opinion. Like, guys rap about fucking bitches and not calling bitches. This is what I think, music should be fun. Like, you in the club or at a bar with your friends or your sister, you’re trying to have fun and then you hear a song come on about, like a rapper that’s so lyrical and she’s talking about how the struggle is, you know, how we should have good credit. I would rather be hearing Future rap about fucking two bitches, and get high and turn it up. You know what I’m saying. So, it’s like people make different types of music for different types of vibes and for different types of things, and people shouldn’t put people down for rapping about, you know, what they want to rap about. “

They are open books in their chronicles as quick to tell you about their pains as they are about their bling. Their story pens itself as a hood to riches fairytale that ends with the girls at the top of the charts. Even though they don’t want the burden of being a role model to land on their shoulders you can’t help but take solace in their confident messages.

“I’m not a role model, and I don’t want to be someone’s role model. At the end

of the day, I’m just being myself. I understand that people look up to me, but I just see it as you can put your mind to anything. You could be anything in the world that you put your mind to. You know, just be a woman with confidence when it comes to men. It’s just like be your best self, live your best life. Be confident in who you are. Be an individual. Be yourself. And don’t take any mess from no man. Don’t let no man run over you.”

The duo met as teenagers in the parts of Miami that seem worlds away from the white sand beaches and oceanfront mansions. No one had it easy, but they had each other.

“We were just two regular hood girls that were just friends. Like, we friends but, we’re sisters.” Yung Miami recalls.

JT, the original rapper of the group, caught refuge at Yung Miami’s house. A place where freedom and creative pursuits were encouraged. Trina was Yung Miami’s godmother and a frequent in the household. She approached Yung Miami one day with two beats and wanting to do a song.

“I always knew we would be something.” JT laments, “Miami was always perfect for me so us together is just perfect, period!”

Sitting around the house they brainstormed ways to record before connecting with the affluent Miami producer Iceberg who let them use the studio.

Yung Miami giggles when she looks back, “When we was in the studio doing the song, we was laughing and saying, oh my god, we so foolish. We really using up people studio time, like why we doing this? Like, why we playing with people. You know, why we wasting the engineer time. And then, there was the moment when we put out the song, and the song started getting, you know, views and plays, you know, getting played in the club, and people making videos. I am like, okay, it’s fun like people were really fucking with us.”

There is a certain laissez-faire attitude to their music that has paved a way for a carefree #DGAF type of girl that rap about subjects that are taboo even by raunchy standards. Their music highlights the ethos of get money or die trying, scheming, popping off, drinking, twerking and having fun. They aren’t here for broke boys or people who try to come from them, as they so eloquently put it, “act up and you can get snatched up.” They are authentically them.

“You know, being a female rap artist, they always trying to compare us to, you know, Nicki Minaj or Meg Thee Stallion. Nicki Minaj is lyrical, Meg Thee Stallion. Is lyrical. The City Girl’s not lyrical. That was always their passion and itch. That was always their goal to be rappers. We have to defend ourselves when people try to compare it to whoever. We always try to tell them, we not that, but we are city girls. We are international. Everybody knows who we is. Everybody loves us for who we are. Our goals weren’t to come in the game to become the next Nicki Minaj or the next Lil Kim, or, you know, rap legends. We just came to make the kind of music that people all over the world can have fun with. When they’re having a bad day turn our music in their car after work, and just have fun. We’re not trying to, you know, step on nobody else toes, or take the title from somebody else. We just being ourselves. Making music and have fun.”

This is just the beginning for the twosome and there is a lot they want to explore. The City Girls is more than a rap group it’s a burgeoning enterprise.

“I want to Explore like, you know, doing shows overseas. Like, I want to see the culture. And feel the love and energy over there. We want to do like, arenas and maybe the Super Bowl one day. We want to do a cosmetic line. Want to have our own clothing store. You know, we just want to branch off into different things. We don’t want to be known for our music. We want to be fashion icons. We want to be in cosmetics. We want our own nail polish one day. You know, we want to take our break into the next stage of the City Girls. To show people that we’re two girls from the hood, and we just have fun within ourselves. Now, we just, we movie stars, we rappers. We fashion icons and just stuff like that. But most of all to have fun.”





TAYLOR TANAKA

PHOTOS / JANELL SHIRTCLIFF
VIDEO STILLS / JULIA PITCH
STYLING / STYLED BY PHIL
MAKEUP / JAPANESE FACES
HAIR / STYLEZ OF PORSCHA
NAILS / MIMI D.
STORY / KOKO NTUEN



CLOTHING, MAISON KITSUNÉ.
EYEWEAR, ANNA-KARIN KARLSSON.
EARRINGS, ALEXIS BITTAR.
BOOTS, MISBHV.

When Teyana Taylor walks into the room, it's like your favorite Auntie has just arrived at the cookout. Surrounded by an entourage, she is warm and glamorous, with her mom and 3-year-old daughter closest to her side and a magnetism that seems to hold them all in her orbit.

Taylor is strikingly beautiful and composed like an exotic cat that prances on expensive furniture and purrs in deep vibrato. There is a statuesque quality to her face and body, as if they were molded in earth-colored marble after a vision of God, yet her greetings are like those of an old friend. Her laugh fills the room like a soft blanket. She exudes happiness and strength in an effortless package that leaves the room in a delighted affront. Our guards come down and I'm left thinking, "Who is she?"

"What makes you happy?" I ask her, almost immediately. I can't help it. It's as if I know her secrets; maybe they can be mine, too.

It doesn't take her long to answer: "My family, my baby, my husband, my parents, my fans, my supporters, seeing others happy. Helping others makes me happy. Creating makes me happy. Directing. Everything that I'm doing makes me happy. I've never done anything that didn't make me happy. Everything I do. I love it. You know, I'm happy doing it in. And I do it for my big girl, you know. And seeing her every day makes me happy. Even on my lowest days."

Most of us post-millennials—the MTV reality TV generation—grew up with Teyana Taylor, or rather she grew up with us. We watched her go from a super sweet 16-year-old MTV star to a butterfly of a woman. Taylor was just a kid when she started accumulating credits towards stardom. At 16, she was listed as a choreographer for Beyoncé's "Ring the Alarm." By 17 she was charting on Billboard, and by 20 she was a mainstay in the entertainment industry, starring in movies, putting out albums and getting co-signed by everyone from Kayne West to Pharrell Williams. Making it past the obscurity and fleeting relevance of child stardom into a strong working adult is not a task that comes easy to most. But Taylor's artistry involved patience and the effort to evolve, outlasting even "Hollywood" standards of time.

Hard work has always been the key to her success, she tells me. "That's the only way that I know," she says. "I don't know other ways. People do a lot of things to get where they are or get where they want to be. And I just choose to do it the hard work way."

Taylor is currently in the epoch of her life, a time when the multi-hyphenate has started to revel in all of her creative outlets. She's the superstar she was always slated to be as a musician, a writer, a director, a dancer, and a producer. (Not to mention part of a celebrity marriage to her NBA player husband, Iman Shumpert.)

Her second studio album, K.T.S.E, is a 70s soul-drenched feel-good record, as well as a reflection of this evolution. It's a lovelorn sexy fete that has all the juxtapositions you might find in one's existence centered on the gospel of life and all the intricacies in between. It's universal but told through the sermon of a strong black woman.

"You really have to take in K.T.S.E, not just like, press play. The album will last a lifetime," Taylor shares. "You can go back and listen to it and be like, 'Oh yeah, this still makes me feel good.' I feel like it's timeless music. I feel like timeless music definitely takes a while to get used to, you know. That's the whole point, for it to still have room to grow. And every time you listen to it, you find something different. You find another reason why you love it or find another reason why you appreciate it."

Nostalgia holds an inspirational place in the artist's heart. In her personal work, most notably when directing under the moniker "Teyana Spike Lee Taylor," you see references in her productions spanning across the decades. She alludes to simpler moments in time when you could feast in love and lostness with less distraction. For Taylor, everything about the 70s is an inspiration.

"The clothes, the music, the hair. The features. Like, everything was [about] what people stood for, you know, and I think what people stand for is definitely coming back. Like the soul, the love, the melanin, the passion... It was real. It was a time where your strong features and everything that you come with was appreciated ... I wish I was there, you know. I really, really feel like sometimes, I just don't belong in this generation."

The emotions she evokes from her subjects as a director, everyone from ASAP Rocky to Monica, envelope the viewer in a velvet brown love den.

"I enjoy being behind the camera so much. I enjoy seeing others. I enjoy bringing visions to life. I enjoy helping, you know, enhance whatever vision an artist might have. It's really fun. I know for a fact when I'm done with music and done being in front of the camera, this directing thing is what I want to do."

Taylor might enjoy sitting in the director's chair, but on stage she is magic. When you watch her perform it's almost a religious cabaret experience that leaves audiences entranced by every performance and appearance.

"Oh my God, I love performing. Literally, if I can get straight to the stage and like, they have like a little remote, where it's like, okay, I'm done. Straight to stage. All the fans already are there, they already know the words. I will skip everything and go straight to the stage. I'm nervous until those curtains open. You know, I just never know what to expect. And when those curtains open and you feel that love and you see that love, all that nervousness really kind of just goes out the window. I think it's the energy that you feel [that] makes you not nervous anymore."

"And I think also seeing people's faces. You [see] people out there crying. There are people out there smiling. They're in awe, you know. You just never know whose day you're making. So, it's just getting out there and giving them a show. People spending hard-earned money to come and see you. So, I was like, you got to do what you got to do. And you know, and get it done. And be touchable, you know. It's okay to be touchable. I never wanted to be an artist that was untouchable. That's why I love performing—o be touchable and really interact with [fans]."

When the music video for "Fade" released in (YEAR), the world was introduced to peak Teyana Taylor. The famous Kayne West video was a cultural moment. The world watched slack-jawed as a postpartum Taylor gyrated suggestively through mid-tempo beats under dark purple lights, a raw and powerful force seeming to move her body and movements.

"As I said, 'I'm all for the world,' she reveals. "I'm all for being touchable, and not trying to keep everything to myself. So, it was dope. It opened up a different platform for women that have been going through postpartum depression or postpartum insecurities, different things like that. Because we all go through it. I think it was dope to be an inspiration and to remind us, women, that we are superwomen. I think that was the most important thing."

"I had no clue when it was coming out," Taylor continues. "I wasn't even there. So, to know that I could capture a whole room of people and not even be there, it was a big deal. I felt the energy all the way at home. That video shows marriage. It shows love. It shows family. It shows me as a lioness. For the next year, it was everything. We inspired so many people to want to love, and to be together. It feels so good to have young couples come up to us and tell us we inspired them. So, that was what we stood for. And that's why we did our TV show after that. It's the touchable factor of showing we're a young couple. We're figuring it out as well, but we love each other."

She's still exploring herself, her relationship, and her power, and we are blessed to watch it all unwind. There are also plans for a movie: "I have my own production company called The Aunties. Right now, we're already working on writing. I definitely want to get into more TV as well, directing episodes. I'm still learning. I'm still focusing and trying to better myself at everything that I do. I'm definitely ready to do something bigger, where everybody can just soak me in for hours."

"I'll then, Taylor is living the dream. It seems worlds away on the other side of the Hollywood sign from most of our humdrum lives, but she wants you to know that any dream is attainable."

"I personally feel like we manifested ourselves. No one person can do it all alone, but it has to be within you. It has to be your dream or vision. You can have a whole team of people, but if you don't believe in yourself and you're not in it the way you should be in it, nothing's going to happen. Once you love it and you're passionate about it and everyone else gets involved and collectively as a team, we all manifest it, you know. About the people that believe in you and are just as passionate about you as you are, that's what manifests it: You, your team, and your passion."

SHIRT+PANTS, CHRISTIAN SIRIANO. ON COVER: HAT, CECILIO LEATHER DESIGNS GLOVES, VEX.



DRESS, BCALLA.
EARRINGS, ANNA-KARIN KARLSSON.
RINGS, ALEXIS BITTAR.



*“I NEVER WANTED TO BE AN
ARTIST THAT WAS
UNTOUCHABLE.”*

SUKI WATERHOUSE

PHOTOS AND SET DESIGN / SOPHIE HART
STYLING / CHLOE AND CHENELLE DELGADILLO
MAKEUP / AUÐUR JÓNSDÓTTIR
HAIR / IGGY ROSALES
GAFFER / ERIC SANCHEZ
SET ASSISTANCE / JAKE TREMBLAY
STORY / CATHERINE SANTINO

Take one look at Suki Waterhouse and it's clear why people are intrigued by her. From her shaggy blonde hair to her signature messy-yet-chic eyeliner, Waterhouse positively nails the effortless, cool-girl look. It's undoubtedly why she was scouted in a pub in her native London at age 16, and why designers have been putting her in their clothes and on their runways since.

Her prominence in the high fashion world has solidified her as a style icon who consistently perfects effortless, French-girl flair. But for Waterhouse, clothes are more than just outward expression. "It goes deeper than just wanting to wear a good outfit," she writes to me in an email conversation. "[Clothes] are with us all the time and they harbor our dreams and memories. I use clothes to shine, to disappear, to protect myself or to take on a certain part of myself."

Waterhouse, now 27, has also taken explored her interests outside of fashion: music, photography, and acting to name a few. She also launched a direct-to-consumer accessories brand called Pop & Suki in 2016 with her best friend, Poppy Jamie. Despite her mainstream fame, Waterhouse maintains an air of mystery; which, of course, only makes her more interesting. "I keep walls up," she says. "Because your personal life isn't a joke or something that I want to shove in people's faces to encourage to be judged."

The internet, she says, can be a nightmare for someone in her position. "People needing to share their opinions on everything on the internet [is the bane of my existence]," she says. "I don't understand it. She has social media accounts, of course, but rather than give her followers a play-by-play on her daily life, Waterhouse curates her Instagram with recent projects and the occasional cryptic, captionless portrait (let's be real; only a true cool-girl can pull those off).

Posting pictures of herself is an inevitable part of modelling, the industry that launched her into fame. Waterhouse has worked with some of the most legendary fashion houses such as Burberry, Tommy Hilfiger, and Balenciaga, and has graced the covers of Vogue, Elle, and Marie Claire. Putting one's physical self on display, especially in such a sexualized industry, has certainly impacted Waterhouse; but not in the way you might think. "Honestly, I'm not sure if it is the male gaze that fucks women up more than we do it to ourselves and to each other," she says. "That was where the pressure came for me. I hate to say it, but I was only ever told to lose weight by women in the industry. It's not to point fingers, it's just how our culture has been for a long time. I think there's a lot of change going on, but still, the most praised people in the mod-

eling world have significantly changed themselves from their normal size, and it won't really change until the consumer stops esteeming it."

Existing under that kind of pressure can surely get overwhelming, but Waterhouse has kept herself balanced with other endeavors, such as writing music. "I usually write when something massive has happened to me. Usually when disaster strikes! So I'm waiting around until I'm so sad that an entire album pours out," she says when I ask about a potential full-length album. Her previous releases have a dreamy, rock-and-roll chillness to them, her London accent peaking through thoughtful, often love-lorn lyrics. When I ask about her influences, she cites mostly female artists: Mazzy Star, Judee Sill, Lucinda Williams, Aimme Mann and Cat Power.

It's not shocking that someone like Waterhouse, who was thrown into the spotlight as a teenager, would look to these iconic women for inspiration. What advice would she offer to other young women? "I'd say learn about the business you're in," she replies. "Too often, there are men above us who control the money and keep you out of those conversations. You have to be such a hard arse, and it goes against all your natural inclinations of being 'nice' and agreeable. Set your standards and then refuse to apologize for them."

Waterhouse has been unapologetic since day one, torpedoing into a creative life as the daughter of a nurse and a surgeon. "I was quite a cannon of a teenager, and when I decided not to keep on studying they were definitely a bit disappointed and worried at first," she says when I ask about her parents' thoughts her career choices. "With all parents though, if they see you're working and not relying on them anymore, they quickly get over that. School might not fit you, but that doesn't mean you aren't enchanted with learning."

So, what's next for Waterhouse, who seems to have dipped her toes into every water of opportunity? "I'd like to learn how to cook," she says. "Even just one thing would be a great start. I've had purely cheese and rose in my fridge for too long now. I'm aiming to do a delivery app wipe out."



“People needing to share their opinions on everything on the internet is the bane of my existence, I don’t understand it.”

OUTFIT, STYLISTS OWN.



BLACK DRESS WITH CAPE, TADASHI SHOJI.
SILVER RING WITH PEARL, APM MONACO.
DIAMANTE EARRINGS, VINTAGE.
BLACK STRAP HEELS, ASOS.



Alison Brie

PHOTOS / JANEL SHIRTCLIFF
STYLING / ELLE STRAUSS @ THE WALL GROUP
MAKEUP / JENNA ANTON @ FORWARD ARTISTS
HAIR / CLARISS RUBENSTEIN @ THE WALL GROUP
STORY / CATHERINE SANTINO
PRODUCER / KOKONTUEN



There's little that Alison Brie can't do. From her side-splitting performance as Annie Edison on NBC's *Community* to crushing scenes on *Mad Men* to commanding the ring in Netflix's wrestling hit *GLOW*, Brie has proven that she's not just a jack of all trades; she's truly a chameleon. "I think I'm always trying to see what new skill I could learn for some new project," she tells me over the phone when I ask her about future endeavors.

But right now, she's basking in the glow of *GLOW*, the Netflix series about a women's wrestling show in the 1980s. *GLOW* premiered its third season on August 9, which takes place in Las Vegas and pivots from the fluffier plotlines it was built on to tackle more serious issues. The season, in my eyes, is a triumph. Perhaps some viewers are turned off by the new direction, but the complexities in season three are what make it so captivating. After all, how many zany wrestling montages could one tolerate? So many television shows fall apart because the end goal set up in the first episode inevitably gets reached and there's little to go on after that. The couple gets together, the killer is found out, the secret gets revealed. Now what? But *GLOW* (which stands for the Gorgeous Ladies of Wrestling - a real TV show in the 1980s) has smartly generated a smattering of complex, thoughtful storylines that propel it through season three and establish a solid future that I, for one, look forward to watching unfold.

Arguably the most significant relationship on *GLOW* is between Brie's character, Ruth Wilder, and her friend-turned-wrestling partner Debbie Eagen, played by Betty Gilpin. After discovering that Ruth had a brief affair with her husband in season one, Debbie slowly and cautiously lets Ruth back in. By season three, their friendship is at its strongest point yet. "I feel like they are the romantic anchor to the show, even though they're not involved romantically," Brie says. "But their friendship certainly runs very deep and this is the first time we really get to see them enjoy each other and each other's company."

"For some reason these two are intrinsically tied to one another," she continues. "And that's where there's this amazing push and pull of them being in the ring together. Even in the first two seasons, when they couldn't stand to look at each other, they still kind of wanted to be near each other."

For Brie, and for the general population, it's refreshing to see a female friendship explored so truthfully and without being warped by the male gaze. The series is produced and showrun by Carly Mensch and Liz Flahive who, says Brie, create a safe environment where the actors can not only explore their characters, but do so without worrying about how they look.

"Liz and Carly have definitely said to us a number of times, 'Don't change your bodies for the show. We cast everyone to be yourselves,'"

Brie tells me. A welcome change on a Hollywood set, Brie confirms, as well as an opportunity for her to stretch her muscles as a performer -- literally and figuratively. "In terms of my relationship with my body, *GLOW* changed my life," she says. "Learning how to wrestle and thinking of myself as an athlete and stunt woman...it just really connected me to my body in a way that I haven't felt maybe ever in my life. I was not an athletic child or a teenager. And working in this industry and even just living my life as a woman, I think I've often felt at odds with my body, wanting it to be something that it's not or just feeling disconnected, and this show really gave me a physical purpose beyond looking attractive, which I think was a really important change in my mindset."

GLOW shines in its commitment to celebrating the female body without objectifying it, something that's apparently very difficult for the rest of humanity. "I would say it is a show about bodies, but it's not a show about sexiness," Brie continues. "I don't ever feel like we're being used for our bodies, but I do love the way the show looks at the female form and the female body in all of its glory, and all different ages and shapes and sizes and ethnicities."

At the forefront of the ensemble is Brie as Ruth, a struggling actress who commits wholeheartedly to her Russian wrestling persona, "Zoya the Destroya". As someone who is drawn to hopelessly vulnerable and earnest characters, Ruth strikes a chord with me. I often wish I could be unapologetically myself no matter who is in the room; instead, I tend to take on the energies of those around me, cautious not to step on any toes. Though Ruth is far from a ball-buster, she knows what she wants and goes after it. "I certainly can identify that part of her that is a fighter, someone who feels underestimated, and is constantly trying to prove her worth to others and to herself," says Brie, though playing an actress has proved to be complicated. "It's such an interesting thing playing an actress who on the show is not seen as a good actress," she continues. "I feel like I've had to sort of look inside myself and examine what kind of actor I think that I am and how I relate to Ruth, and then in other ways how I am different."

Brie was able to take a step back from Ruth in episode 7, where she makes her directorial debut on "Hollywood Homecoming". "It was really exciting to work with the cast and crew in a different way," she says. "And it was so engaging. [The cast and crew were] so incredibly supportive of me. I feel like it was a kind of a dream come true."

"Dream come true" is also how Brie describes her work on *The Rental*, an upcoming thriller directed by her husband, Dave Franco. The film, due out in 2020, is Franco's directorial debut and surrounds a couple who rents a vacation home for a weekend trip. "It doesn't feel like your typical thriller," Brie says. "It's very grounded. It feels more like a relationship drama." Of course, I'm extremely curious about what



BODYSUIT AND MATCHING SKIRT, MONIQUE L'HUILLIER.

it's like to be directed by your spouse. "You know, when you're acting in front of the person who knows you the most, you really can't get away with any bullshit," she says. "It was just extremely easy to communicate with him. It was a really special time I think to be able to be there for his first project and witness that and work on it together."

Did they have to establish a boundary between their professional and personal lives? I ask. "Not at all," Brie replies with a laugh. "I do feel like week one in rehearsal we had a moment where I was like 'Honey, do you want me to leave earlier?' And I took him aside and I was like, 'Do you want me to call you Dave?' and he was like 'No.'"

2020 is shaping up to be the year of thrillers for Brie, as she's also starring in the forthcoming *Promising Young Woman*, alongside Carey Mulligan and Bo Burnham. Emerald Fennell, who showran the second season of *Killing Eve*, wrote and directed the film. "It's sort of a revenge thriller, but done in a really cool, unexpected way," Brie says. "And I'm working with Carey Mulligan was so gratifying. She's such an incredible actress and the whole cast of the film is."

Between *GLOW* and her meaty film roles, it seems like there's little left that Brie hasn't touched. But, like Ruth, she's continuously aiming for something higher. "I'm always trying to try different things and push myself and take different risks," she says when I ask about what she wants to explore in the future. "I've been really desiring to push the boundaries even further and work in some different genres and work more on the other side of the camera. I would love to do even a wilder horror movie or a crazy action movie."

Clearly, she's capable of an action hero's physical demands. Perhaps the Marvel Universe is the next logical step for Alison Brie? "From your mouth to God's ears," she says when I propose it.

RICO NASTY

PHOTOS / JASON RODGERS
PHOTO ASSISTANT / RICHARD LUONG
STYLING / TIFFANI WILLIAMS
MAKEUP / SCOTT OSBOURNE OF THE SCOTT EDIT
HAIR / DEBORAH BRIDER
STORY / KOKO NTUEN + MADISON FRAUSTO
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT / SAM BERLIN
SHOT @ MEDIUMPLEX DAYLIGHT STUDIO



HAT, CFB COSTUME DESIGN.
NECKLACE, FLYING SOLO.



EARRINGS, BEN AMUN.
TOP, CHAE.

When Rico Nasty released her latest Kenny Beats produced Anger Management earlier this year, it was by all accounts a big dick energy affair. It's a hype by proxy that gives the listener all the agency of a punk rock-inspired rage.

"Anger Management is me exploring more of my lyrics, my voice and a lot of having fun. Saying crazy shit and hyping them up... I just wanted to show people I can rap. I don't want them (fans) to get too comfortable with it," she says nonchalantly

The Maryland raised rapper's story comes at you hard in pronounced chatter and beats that weave together the pieces of her life as part fairytale, grit and grime that she has had to rise above.

"I think this music shit was the only way I was gonna get out of what I was coming from," the artist says matter of factly.

What she was coming from was being a single mother working in the hospital and over the humdrum existence. She knew she was sitting on a goldmine with her lyrical skills. Rap was always her forte. She started young and by fifteen she was garnering local attention. In an interview with HotNewHipHop last year she says,

"I know for a fact that rapping was what I wanted to do 'cause I've always done music. When I was in high school when I was in 10th grade, I was the only girl in Prince George — shit, I was the only bitch in Maryland who had a fuckin' tape out. Fuck all that, I was the only bitch. And people used to come up to me and my 15-year-old ass like "Yo! You were going dumb!" N****s tryna book me for shows. I'm 15, my mom's like "girl, get the fuck on like you already out here not going to school, you got this lil' mixtape out."

Her process is a natural one that doesn't feel forced or falsely narrated. It's a very "shoot from the hip" point of view taking the world as a front-seat passenger in her ride, driving fast but never losing control. Her inspirations come from life.

"I feel like a lot of people might think I am rude or something because I pick up my phone randomly a lot and it's just because you get bars you get lyrics from experience and I could literally be talking to someone they say some funny ass shit, and I'm like Oh shit that's a bar. I just write that shit that down right there and then. I don't waste any time. I don't have a specific time of the day where I'm like 'Oh Let me write', your imagination is working at all times during the day. If you have a dream and wake up and you are able to remember that shit, you should write that shit down cause that's God talking to you."

Before she made music she was a painter and she would draw what she saw in her dreams. It's the same with music she says but with words.

"When I was transitioning from being an artist to being a rapper I didn't want to tell anyone I was making music, I didn't want people to listen to my music. Even when I would record my voice would be very fucking low. I would never yell or scream because there would be other people in the studio and I was just super self-conscious. After that, I finally made a good song in front of a bunch of people and I was like, what the fuck am I being shy



for they're gonna bop their heads to whatever I do. As an artist and a person who paints, I kinda had to just go with that confidence. When I draw a picture bro I'm not drawing this to prove to people, I'm drawing it because there will be one person who understands what I was trying to get across and then wanna buy this shit. That's the same approach you use with music, you have to take your confidence and say 'Im my biggest fan. They'll understand later."

Confidence is a driving factor in Rico Nasty's life and career. In her world the more the better. There is enough space to accommodate everyone's creative freedom, messaging and prerogative.

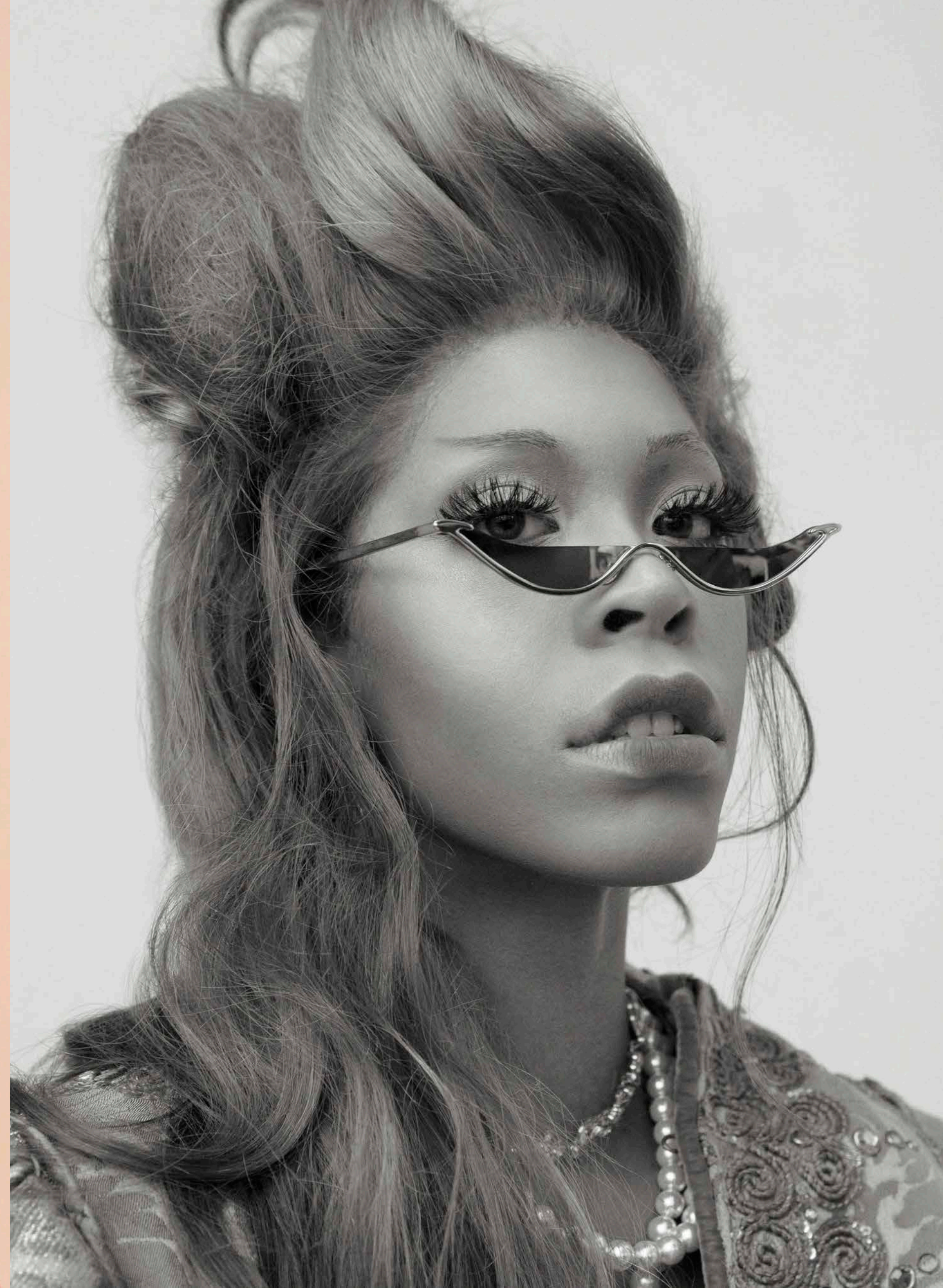
"There will be someone out there who fucking appreciates it. Don't limit your creativity just because the people you might be in the room with might not get it. The world is big as fuck bro, its huge, and there's a reason why you thought about it because someone out there can relate to it. So you just gotta be a vessel. You gotta trust that you are a vessel in this shit, trust that you are a person who brings these messages. As creatives and artists that's what our purpose is."

As far as creating Rico is just getting started. When she's asked what other creative mediums she'd like to explore a smile stretches across her face when she said acting. "I've always lowkey wanted to be an Avenger or be on Kick-Ass or something."

Imagining the type of superhero Rico Nasty would be is not far off from the superhuman that she is to the world every day. One that has always gone with the voice in her head as a north star towards her path.

"You gotta trust that you are a vessel in this shit, trust that you are a person who brings these messages. As creatives and artists, that's what our purpose is."

SUNGLASSES, CHRIS HABANA.
EARRINGS + NECKLACE, BEN AMUN.
RINGS, SOLOMEINA.
CORSET + SKIRT, CFB COSTUME DESIGN.
LINGERIE, PURPLE PASSION.
OPPOSITE PAGE:
SUNGLASSES, CHRIS HABANNA.
CHOKER, STYLIST OWN.
NECKLACE, BEN-AMUN.
ROBE, CFB COSTUME DESIGN.
LINGERIE, COSABELLA.



EARRINGS, SOLOMEINA.
NECKLACE, FIAT LUX SF.
GLOVES, WING AND WEFT.
BLAZER, KATERYNA SAVCHENKO.
PANTS, CHAE.



SADIBEE GIRL



PHOTOS/ JONATHAN FASULO
STYLING/ DAISY DE JESUS
MAKEUP/ EMILY AMICK
HAIR/ BIBB DICKEY
MODEL/ ALBELIS @MUSE



FUR SCARF, PELUSH. DRESS, DE LA VALI. CUFF,
ALEXIS BITTAR. SHOES, ALEXANDER WANG.
OPPOSITE PAGE: JACKET, TOMMY HILFIGER X ZEN-
DAYA. SHIRT, ASADY. PANTS, MISSONI. SHOES,
LAURENCE DACADE.

DRESS, MALAN BRETON.
SHOES, ZARA.
JEWELRY, STYLIST'S OWN.



DEWANDA WISE

PHOTOS/EMILY MALAN
STYLING / SHAHIRAH AHMED
MAKEUP / BETHANY GARITA FOR EXCLUSIVE ARTISTS USING MENTED COSMETICS
HAIR / NENA SOUL FLY
STORY / KOKO NTUEN

It's Saturday morning, and DeWanda Wise is on her favorite corner of the couch enjoying her morning coffee and watching her husband and fellow actor Alano Miller run lines on the other end. The light shines in the windows and her cat is meowing on her lap. She hasn't consumed the "the soul-crushing daily news yet" and is "relishing in a little bit of heaven".

Los Angeles is a long way from the various Maryland cities that raised her: Jessup, Woodlawn, Cherry Hill, Catonsville, Laurel, Silver Spring, and Clarksville were some of the places she called home. She was a popular teen, which is easy to imagine with her hazel colored eyes, high cheekbones, and symmetry defined face. "Dumb popular," she says sheepishly.

"I'm talking Homecoming and Prom Queen, but it wasn't because I was "movie-cool". I just really loved my classmates. All of them. I thought they were all so interesting, and I never chose a single clique (outside of my Brother's group—The L Mob. Hey y'all!) What's great about being super popular in High School, and to be fair, college too is that you get your fill. So now, in the High School that is Hollywood, I don't concern myself with popularity. I'm happy with my little tribe."

Growing up she wanted to be a theater actor. It's as pretentious as it sounds. She thought the stage, like Shakespeare and Tennessee Williams before her, was what "real art" was.

"Needless to say," DeWanda giggles, "I'm glad I got out of my own way. In my defense, I could not have envisioned at the time that the work I have access to now would exist in Film/TV."

Success was not a straight path for the actor. She spent ten years being a step away from applying for grad programs, envious of others' success in her dream career, crying and throwing self-pity parties. Her husband Alano was one of her biggest motivators to keep going.

"Alano is the kind of person who watches Hitch on TBS like he's never seen it before. His optimism and energy know no bounds. He's tireless and gives the greatest pep-talks known to man. There was no quitting in this house for either of us and over the past ten years we've both happily picked up the financial slack if/when the other was going through a hard time career-wise. We literally started from the bottom."

That carefree bohemian spirit that excludes from DeWanda has followed her through her various roles. Most famously as Nola Darling

in Spike Lee's Netflix series, *She's Gotta Have It*. Adapted from his debut 1986 feature film, the film went on to attain cult movie status not without its controversies. In her reprised for TV role, DeWanda settled into Nola like a second skin bringing complexities, struggles, and beauty of black womanhood to life. She also suddenly became pushed to the front of the media's watch list as Mr. Lee's new anti-ingénue and star of one of the most talked-about shows of the season.

"Playing Nola and working with Mr. Lee was the actualization of 'if you can make it here, you can make it anywhere.' Our show was incredibly fast-paced, and even though she was a woman who felt impulsive and unpredictable, I could not actually afford to be. She proved to me that I have the stamina, discipline, and leadership skills to be #1 on the call sheet. On the spiritual side, when you come primarily from independent cinema and theater, you are accustomed to your work reaching the relatively few people it's meant to reach and touch. Nola meant a lot to many people, and I could not be more grateful to have that heart/soul connection with people from all over the world."

The roles that she has taken on have been a variety of personalities and topics showcasing her range. Changing the narrative is something that DeWanda wants to do for not just herself, but Hollywood as well. She adds a dimension of naivety and a fresh vision that is disrupting the archaic gatekeepers.

"I've been very fortunate to play a vast variety of things. Besides the bohemian vibes you've mentioned before, I've played immensely affluent and bougie in *The Weekend*, 1860's Gullah in *Underground*, a grieving mother in *Shots Fired*, incarcerated in *Firelight*, an astronaut in *Twilight Zone*, and those are just the on-screen things. I've played revolutionaries, a lawyer, a woman living with HIV, done Greek Tragedy and Shakespeare. I'm putting this in print because often folks have seen about 10 percent of most actors work. I don't expect people to have seen everything—that would just be narcissistic and ridiculous—but I do expect gatekeepers to presume that actors act. To call them in even if they "can't see it." I'm happy with what I've done so far, so really I'm speaking for my cohorts and colleagues whom I personally want to see a whole lot more of. It bears repeating that artists of color are the first to be type-cast in the worst ways. It takes tenacity as an artist to continue shifting people's POV. So I'm saying here: STOP. Let us be great."

Playing roles that approach being a black woman in a multi-faceted way is important to DeWanda.



I think many of us, both artists and viewers, are strongly and positively responding to stories that are not predicated on Black Suffering. Personally, I actually have zero shame about the history of Black Americans in this country. It is my strong belief that if transgenerational trauma is passed through our DNA, then transgenerational triumph must be as well. As an actor, I just move through threads of exploration, and this thread of what you describe as 'bohemian free love' women started with a simple desire to be pretty and smart in something, which was my allure to Jahir Jetter's 'How to Tell You A Douchebag.' Before that film, no one saw me as sexy/desirable. I was a character actress with a pretty face. So Douchebag led me to Nola, which led me to Erin, and I think I have two more coming before I exhaust the exploration and move on to something else.

This year is a year for exploration for DeWanda in the various projects she has coming up. One of them being 'Willight Zone' with Jordan Peele, one of the most anticipated projects of the decade.

Working on 'Willight Zone' was like being back in Theater School in the absolute best way! We had an intimate cast of some acting beasts: Jefferson White, Jessica Williams, Lucinda Dryzek, and Jonathan Whitesell. Our director, Jakob Verbruggen is by far the most enthusiastic and specific director I've worked with in television next to Anthony Hemingway. It was so much fun, and such a new challenge. I can't say much because nothing's been announced, but remember what I said before about exploring a concept to exhaustion? The 'Willight Zone' marked the beginning of a new phase of exploration for me for sure.

DRESS, MALAN BRETON.
STYLIST'S OWN JEWELRY.

GIDEON ADLON

PHOTOS / EMILY MALAN
STYLIST / CATLIN MYERS
HAIR / LAURA POLKO
MAKEUP / AMY STROZZI
STORY / KOKO NTUEN

Watching Gideon Adlon on-screen is a familiar feeling, like running into someone you see on the elevators at work in public. You want to say “hi” but then realize you never met. She conveys an archetype of the girl next door, to the girl next door someone that is just as prone to romance as they are to danger.

Since we were introduced to Gideon in her breakout big-screen debut, 2018’s *Blockers*, Hollywood has developed an appetite for the rising star. The actress has booked roles from acclaimed indie film *Mustang* produced by Robert Redford to recurring roles in *American Crime* and *When We Rise*. Most recently was announced to star as part of the coven of highschool witches in the remake of mid 90s film, “*The Craft*”. She is still getting used to it all. “When I first saw my face on a billboard it was a trip, they were literally everywhere, and it honestly took a while to register that it was MY face!”

Though she grew up in an esteemed Los Angeles household (her mom is icon Pam Adlon), that label makes her laugh a bit.

“We were very sheltered from Hollywood until we really started working ourselves. Our mom is a real one, she was never really involved in the glitz and glamour parts of it all, she just loves to work.”

Her childhood was ideal surrounded by the melting pot of L.A, albeit the normal challenges of growing pains.

“I was badly bullied in elementary school, and I’ve had some family problems in and out of the years. But, nobody is perfect and everyone has to go through tough shit to come out the other end and become the best person they can be from all of the lessons they’ve learned.”

Cinema was a nice solace and fascination for her as a child. Classics like *Funny Girl* and TV shows like *The Munsters* were part of her upbringing. The art of the craft just gave her a thrill that she found hard to find elsewhere. “I started with theater and at first I was just doing it for fun but deep down there was something about it that made me feel really good inside. I didn’t know that my life path would lead me to be in front of the camera, but I wouldn’t want it any other way. Acting is about transformation. To me, that’s the most beautiful part of the craft.”

Of all the cinematic mediums, theater still has a special place in her heart. “I went to public high school and I took part in DTASC for four years in high school. We would put together plays (mostly Shakespeare) we’d reverse tirelessly after school for a month and then go and compete against other high schools near the end of the school year. This was an after school program provided by my high school. It got me excited to go to school every day and gave me something to look forward to rather than just loathing going to school altogether. I loved it. I think having an outlet for arts at any school is important because kids need a place to let loose, a place to feel comfortable and to create things they usually wouldn’t be doing anywhere else. The arts in school, be it multimedia, dance, music, or theatre is so extremely important for the youth of all ages.”

The starlet has come a long way from the stage, but getting there wasn’t a

straight path. Like any burgeoning actor, the audition process came with its trials and tribulations.

“I think the hardest part for an actor is when you’re very very close to the end of the booking process and then the role goes to someone else. I’m never angry, I’m always happy for my fellow actors, booking is incredible. I just find myself getting very involved in the script and what I could do with it before even booking and that is what makes rejection difficult to bare. All of us have to deal with rejection. At points, it’s the thing that has made me want to give up, but at the end of the day, it’s more so what pushes me to keep moving forward and become bigger and better.”

Up next, the actress has a lot she wants to explore. She would love to do a period piece, work with Woody Harrelson and continue to learn from the actors she gets to work with. As far as her private life, mum’s the word on that for now.

“It’s always nice to have some mystery,” she says, signing off.



JANE LEVY

PHOTOS / TYLER ROWELL
STYLING / ALVIN STILLWELL
HAIR / CERVANDO MALDONADO
MAKEUP / TOBY FLEISHMAN
STORY / BRYANNA DOE

Throughout her career, Jane Levy has played a wide variety of different roles: an idealistic scientist willing to do almost anything for the greater good in Netflix series *What/If*, an aspiring writer that cannot seem to escape a dark destiny in Hulu's *Castle Rock*, a snarky teenager longing to escape to the big city in ABC's hit show *Suburgatory*, and a modern scream queen in Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead* remake. Despite the vast differences in each of their personalities and portrayals, Jane says that all of the characters she's played are like her in some way. "I guess the least like me is my character in *Evil Dead*," Jane muses, "because in *Evil Dead* I played the Devil."

Jane's diverse filmography only makes sense considering the way the actress chooses her roles. "I am more drawn to good writing than particular kinds of roles," says Jane. "I guess I try to avoid clichés. I am definitely drawn to humor. I like peculiar stories and characters." Jane finds inspiration in a variety of sources as well, citing a long list of influences: friends Jenny Slate and Mae Whitman, Holly Hunter, Viola Davis, Lucille Ball, the films of Jonathan Demme, drag queens, and her acting coach as well. "The list of people I'd like to work with is also very long," Jane says. "But to name one, Paul Thomas Anderson!"

"I dropped out of college in 2008 to pursue acting," Jane explains, reflecting on getting her start as an actress. "I had no idea what I was doing and no reason to think it could work. My parents were skeptical but supportive, and I enrolled at the Stella Adler Studio of Acting less than a year later. When we were about to graduate we sent our headshots and resumes to various managers and agents. I had a really great headshot, apparently, and I got a meeting with a manager. He started sending me on auditions and I booked the leading role in an independent movie. The casting director Deanna Brigidi championed me and sent my audition to agents in Los Angeles, convincing them to sign me." Thinking back to what she would call her "big break", Jane has trouble deciding. "I played Mandy in the first season of *Shameless* before leaving the show to work on *Suburgatory* on ABC," she says. "I guess those both in conjunction?"

Jane notes that while she did not always want to be an actress, her favorite thing about the industry is reminiscent of her first pursuit, as an

athlete. "My favorite thing about making movies and television is the teamwork and camaraderie," Jane says. "I played soccer seriously as a teenager and the idea of reaching a goal with a group gets me high. Every so often, everything aligns and everyone on set works in unison and beautiful collaborative art is made and it feels like magic." Jane goes on to share her favorite past projects, though she again finds it difficult to pick just one. "There have been a couple defining projects for me, all for different reasons. As I answer this question I begin to feel very nostalgic. I loved working on *Fun Size* (the 2012 teen comedy in which Jane starred alongside Victoria Justice). It was my first movie and it was like summer camp but better times a lot. I made lifelong friends on the film *I Don't Feel at Home in This World Anymore* (a favorite at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival). *Zoey's* is high up on my favorite list."

This upcoming project, *Zoey's Extraordinary Playlist*, is one that Jane states she is very proud of. "There's an earnestness and joy about it that I think is not common at the moment. It's about empathy and love and loss, and at its core it's about this dorkus coder named Zoey who is forced to finally "hear the music." In the NBC musical series, slotted to premiere in early 2020, Jane plays San Francisco computer coder Zoey, who develops the ability to "hear the innermost wants and desires of the people around her through songs." This series will mark Jane's return to network television after a couple years' absence. On the difference between working on smaller independent projects versus the big name studios, Jane says, "On smaller productions it's clear that people are there for the story and the art, and sometimes on bigger projects it's glaringly obvious people are only working for the cash."

Regardless of whether it's a blockbuster or an independent project, we're likely to see a lot of Jane Levy in the future. And just as it's nearly impossible to know which type of role Jane will take on next, it's also difficult to pin her down to a simple soundbite. When asked for the most important thing she wants people to know about her, the actress said simply, "That this question is giving me a disproportionate amount of anxiety."





JACKET, SHIRT + PANTS, DEATH BY TENNIS. GLASSES, GENTLE MONSTER.

ASHER ANGEL

PHOTOS / STORM SANTOS
STYLING / ALEXIS BERGENS
HAIR / HELEN ROBERTSON FOR EXCLUSIVE ARTISTS USING LEONOR GREYL PARIS
MAKEUP / ALEX THAO
STORY / SAMANTHA BERLIN

It's been a year of growth, new beginnings, melancholy endings and new exploration for 16-year-old Asher Angel. The chiseled face, dimple cheeked teenager has blossomed full force into his multi-hyphate talents of acting, singing and music. Look no further than his song and video for "One Thought Away" featuring Wiz Khalifa to see an album of talents on full display in under four minutes.

By the ripe age of five, Angel and family decided to nurture his passions of acting and singing. From the 2008 film *Jolene* to several Broadway productions in his hometown of Paradise Valley, Arizona, Angel was quick to make a name for himself.

By then, Angel's mom agreed to evolutionize his career by bringing him to the holy land: Los Angeles. It was here that Angel earned the role as Jonah Beck in Disney Channel's *Andi Mack*. This fall will be the final season of the show, meaning Angel has some decisions on which way he wants to fly his wings. According to Angel, it's all looking up from here.

"This show will forever hold a special place in my heart. I've created so many incredible memories with such amazing people and getting to portray such a great character that made an impact on the world is all that I could ever wish for. I'm happy that the story stayed and felt authentic up until the end."

Asher's descent into music has been well recieved by the industry and his Disney era fans judging my the millions of views each one of his videos racks up on Youtube. Often playing on those young love tropes his music is as sweet as a extra serving of icecream but leaves you wanting just a little bit more.

"I've been up crazy
Look what you made me
Checking your Instagram lately"

He croons on "One Thought Away". Mmm. The sweet innocence of gen-z love and the romantic gestures of Instagram stalking. According to Angel, "I think different people experience love differently and it changes based on your age, experience and perspective." Angel also believes that even though Khalifa is double his age, the songwriting experience was organic and their thoughts on love were pretty universal.

"I firmly believe that music and art can redefine traditional boundaries and expected norms. So age ever played a role in the concept or execution of *One Thought Away*."

From theater to television to music, Angel hasn't yet found himself

at the crossroads between the four. He says that he will never not act, sing and write music and he does not fear having to focus in on just one skill.

"I love to act. I love to write, sing and create music. They drive my passion and allow me to communicate in a way I otherwise could not. I will never stop doing both."

Angel might be young, but he is ready to keep exploring. Whether that be in his personal life or professional life, Angel sees himself delving more into the production scene. But before he can do this, he knows he must gain connections in the movie scene.

Earlier this spring, Angel starred as anti-hero Billy Batson, the 14-year-old who can transform into an adult superhero with the shout of one word: *Shazam!* Angel says he connects with Batson's familial strength and values.

Shazam! was a hit at the box office channeing a PG-13 version of *Deadpool* and putting Asher on his biggest platfrom yet.

While his 2019 has been one for the books, Angel anticipates many more career opportunities in the near future.

"I see myself acting, singing, writing and producing. Continuing to pursue the arts and my passion for the arts. Making a deeper connection with my audience and myself... I want to perform on Broadway - I would absolutely love to play *Pippin* that would be a dream. I also want to portray a character with a lot of depth and pain and arc and bring that person to life."

This is primarily what makes Angel stand out: he's not like most 16-year-olds acting on Disney Channel. He knows what he wants and he will stop at nothing to get there. His ability to work with his idols, such as Wiz Khalifa, and stay professional while also intuitive is why we have no doubts that he will be the award winning singer, actor and producer that he wants to be.

As for the next five years, Angel says he's excited to see what comes but is nervous to leave his teenage years behind.

"Crazy to think that in five years I'll be 22..."

Does he think 22 is old?

BLAZER, WILLIAM LEI.
SHIRT, COS.
PANTS, RUSTY CUTS.
VINTAGE BOOTS, FORREST
AND GROVES.
GLASSES, BONNIE CLYDE.

**“I WANT TO PORTRAY
A CHARACTER WITH
A LOT OF DEPTH AND
PAIN AND ARC AND
BRING THAT PERSON
TO LIFE.”**

SWEATER, J.W. ANDERSON.

BRANDI QUINONES

Brandi Quinones is a name that some may find to be synonymous with the '90s. From the time that she was literally discovered in a shopping mall at age 15, she was gracing the runway and the pages of Vogue and Elle Spain. From '94-'98, Quinones spent almost every season walking shows for the likes of Dior, Chanel, Versace.

But while Quinones may seem to be evocative of the past, what she really was was a harbinger of the future. For an industry that strives to embody multiplicities and evolving cultures, fashion seems to reserve heterogeneity for the clothing. A girl of mixed race, specifically a girl of Afro-Cuban/Sicilian heritage, was an uncommon cover star. Quinones has discussed that despite her easy discovery, it was a fight for magazine editors to accept someone they couldn't categorize, which spurred her on to continue showcasing her diversity in order to help break barriers for future generations. Armed with her sweeping signature walk, Quinones continues to make strides in the fashion industry, as the industry fights to keep up.

I know you've mentioned that you like to keep moving forward instead of focusing on the past, but considering you were discovered so suddenly, was modeling always a dream you had as a kid? Have your feelings toward modeling evolved throughout your career?

No, nothing has changed all that much. I don't look to the past because there's no check there. I still live for my dreams of high fashion and still command a high rate. So no, no changes.

PHOTOS / SHEVON MILLER
STYLING / NICK COHEN
HAIR / ORLANDO PALMER
MAKEUP / ZULEIKA VIERA
STORY / SAMANTHA BERLIN
NAILS / CASSANDRA DUNFORD

Do you feel as though you're seeing more inclusion on the runway and in editorial as opposed to when you were starting out?

Yes.

Have there been times you found it hard to stay positive in an industry centered around physical attributes?

That's always an issue, but I didn't get here by accident or worrying.

Do you think Instagram is helpful in making some of the ideas of modeling more accessible? Or do you think it's more harmful?

As long as it comes with a check of positivities then it helps.

Do you think this commodification of modeling on Instagram can take away from the work that high fashion models like yourself do?

For sure it hurts but it also helps. Real fashion will always be real fashion.

Have there been specific designers and/or photographers whose artistry inspired you while you were collaborating?

Yes, I'm a huge fan of Mr. Helmut Newton's work. I would always see him and was so upset at his passing. My dream of working with him will not happen but I just love him and his work so much!!!!

RODEO A GO GO

PHOTOS/ LUCAS PASSMORE
STYLING/ MICHAEL BRIALES
MODEL/ PYPER AMERICA
MAKEUP/ SONIA RESH
HAIR/ BRIANA DUNNING





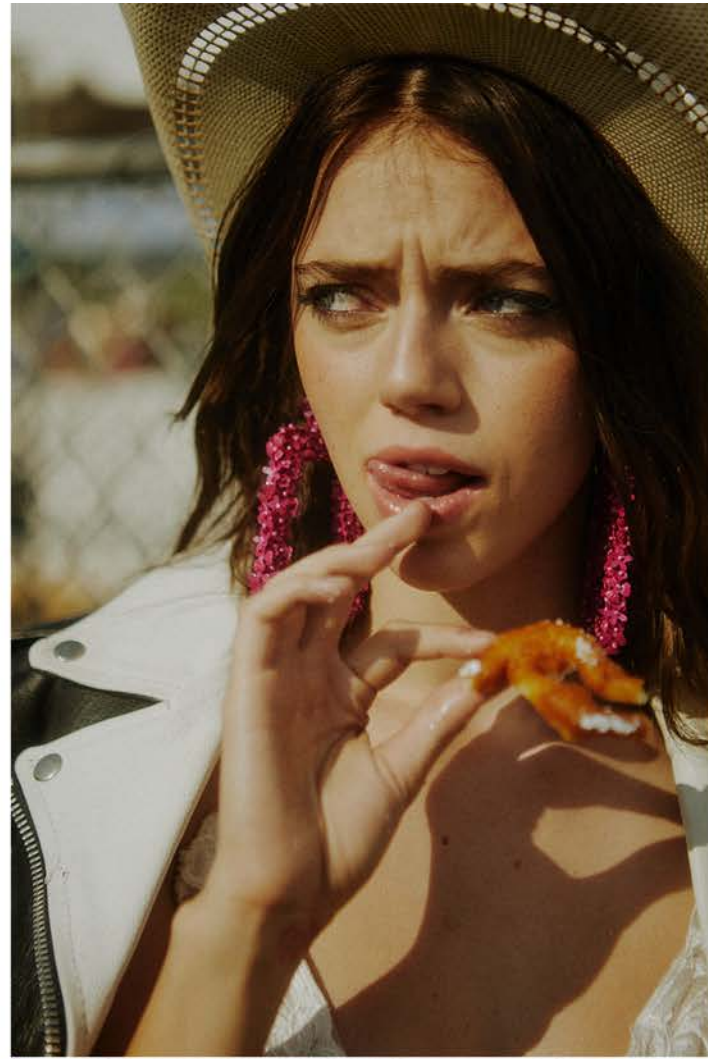
VEST, BOLO TIE + EARRINGS, VINTAGE.
HAT, BOOT BARN.



TOP + TROUSERS, AZZI & OSTA.
HAT, BOOT BARN.

HAT, GLADYZ TAMEZ.
TOP, ZHIVAGO.
SKIRT, IVY.
EARRINGS, HOUSE OF EMMANUELE.
BANDANA, VINTAGE.
BOOTS, BOOT BARN.





LEATHER JACKET, BARNEYS.
JUMPSUIT, SE DOLLS HOUSE.
EARRINGS, VINTAGE.
HAT + BELT, BOOT BARN.



FAUX FUR JACKET, NIKITA KARIZMA.
LATEX TOP + BOTTOMS, DEAD LOTUS.
CHAPS, VINTAGE.
HAT + BELT, BOOT BARN.

SAY WHAT YOU WANT!
WEAR WHAT YOU WANT!



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