

sunday

style

AUSTRALIA'S BIGGEST GLOSSY

RITA ORA

FASHION REBEL
MEGASTAR
MASTER FLIRT

+

NEW COOL
AUTUMN
TRENDS

bring it!

The rise of the
EXTROVERT



(cover_story)

RITA

RITA ORA ISN'T SHY WHEN IT COMES TO HER STYLE, CAREER OR LYRICS, BUT UNDERNEATH THE EXTROVERT IS A MUCH SOFTER WOMAN, DISCOVERS CHARLOTTE WARD



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FOOTAGE FROM THE 'RADIOACTIVE' FILM CLIP

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RITA'S STYLE



(Clockwise from above)

BEANIE BABE "This was on the way to the studio the other day. I love my beanies! I'm wearing a vintage jacket with a Rocksmith beanie. The top is by these two cool girls called Local Heroes. It's called the Pixel F*ck tee."

MIX, NOT MATCH "I hate this outfit. This was after the Chanel show [in Paris] and Cara and I shared a hotel room. I had no thick trousers and I was so cold, so I borrowed her Adidas Originals Jeremy Scott ski pants. I don't know where I was going with that jumper. It was all of my crazy things mixed at once. When my stylist, Kyle, saw it he said, 'What were you thinking?'"

VINTAGE SUMMER "This was a family holiday at Christmas. I'm wearing Jean Paul Gaultier sunglasses, a Seventh Wonder Arabella one-piece from ASOS and a headband from Accessorize."

Rita Ora is draped on a leather sofa in her record company's London headquarters, all doe eyes, peroxide-blond hair and red lipstick. "Sorry, I was just eatin'!" she exclaims in her breathy London accent, jumping up and wiping away the crumb remnants of a sandwich. "I've been up since 6am and I'm starving!"

As Jay-Z's protégé – and support act for Usher, DJ Fresh and Coldplay, as well as recent collaborator with Snoop Lion – the 22-year-old singer is undoubtedly well on her way to matching the likes of Rihanna, Lady Gaga and Nicki Minaj in the diva stakes. But a superstar entourage is notably absent. So, where are her 'people'? The publicists who sit on the periphery and interrupt? The assistants to help her sip her water, Mariah Carey style? "I don't like that kind of stuff," she says. "Everyone always asks, 'Where's your assistant?' But I'm always by myself. I prefer to be alone."

Born in 1990 in Pristina, in war-torn Yugoslavia, Ora moved to the UK as a refugee with her family when she was barely a year old. Starting a new life in Ladbroke Grove in West London, she, her older sister, Elena, and their parents crammed into one room to make ends meet. Her parents (her dad, Besnik, now owns a pub and her mum, Vera, is a psychiatrist) made it their mission to work hard to provide for their family.

When the young Ora showed singing and acting promise, they did extra shifts to pay for her to go to London's famous Sylvia Young Theatre School. "Growing up, I wasn't a privileged kid but I was a lucky kid," she recalls. "We were very family orientated. I didn't realise at the time just how hard my parents were working to give me the opportunities I needed."

"The way I was raised, it was very much 'go strong' or not at all. They've always been happy I'm doing what I love. They're the best parents anyone could ever ask for," she adds.

Ora emerged from stage school polished and preened but, for a while at least, was just another talented teenager working in a shoe shop and performing gigs on the pub circuit. But at the age of 17, she featured on a couple of Craig David tracks, and within two years was signed to Jay-Z's Roc Nation label. In true fairytale-popstar style, she went on to receive advice on her first album from none other than her idol Beyoncé, and by 2011, was well on her way

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to stardom after appearing with DJ Fresh in his video 'Hot Right Now'.

The song went to number one in the UK and Ora was soon propelled to international stardom, with singles 'How We Do (Party)' and 'R.I.P.' bringing her to Australia, to perform on *The X Factor*.

Having come from such humble beginnings, it must now feel strange to be in the position where companies ply her with products, desperate for her to endorse their wares? "Yeah," she admits. "I'm turning into a hoarder – I don't want to throw anything away! It's nice, though. I always think, this will be nice for my mum, or this will look really cute on my sister. I'm not complaining about the decorations of doing my job."

But life on tour (and being assistant free) means the singer's home comforts often fall by the wayside. She's been meaning to buy new curtains for three years and the pantry is constantly bare. "I got home from my tour and there were milk, eggs and bacon in the fridge," she says. "All my washing was done and the house was clean – basically, mum had been round. She's always like, 'Are you sleeping? Have you eaten? Don't talk too much and lose your voice...' She's a great mum."

Once you get Ora talking, it's easy to see why her family tells her to conserve her voice. The star chats and giggles in a charmingly childlike way; she fidgets too much, and when she's nervous, she fiddles with the ring on her left hand (an 18th birthday present from her mum). Her eyes and body language are warmlike, I don't know... I'm still as she enthuses about a boy she went out with at school – "He was so hot. Everyone knew, 'Don't go with Jamie as he's with Rita'" – and lists her best childhood friends – "Mishka, Kyle, Anda, Mrika and Dina. They're my rocks, my soldiers..."

But as laid-back as she seems, it's clear the star's still sussing fame out. "I think Twitter is the best and worst thing that's happened to public figures," she says. "It's genius and it can ruin your life." She pauses. "I thought I nearly had a 'ruined' moment but, no. For example, when you're involved with someone for a while and they decide to express their feelings to the public – that's not my personal way of therapy, but I guess everyone takes split-ups differently... You should have to sit an exam before you go on Twitter. To see if you're, like, mentally stable."

Ora, of course, is alluding to her break-up with US TV personality Rob Kardashian who, rather cruelly, tweeted: "She cheated

on me with nearly 20 dudes while we were together..." She sighs. "I don't think about it. I don't vocalise things that don't deserve attention. It was something that was so unnecessary. Why would you flood people's brains with unnecessary shit? In my world, things like that just aren't important."

A lot of people would've been very upset by it. "Yes, I guess so," she admits, softening. "But I never thought it was actually a relationship, in all honesty. I never mentally defined it as 'boyfriend, girlfriend'. When I split up with him, I said, 'It's because I'm never there, I don't know how to do it.' That's all I said, then... the rest happened. He obviously felt that creating myths was the way forward."

Despite being stung by the acrimonious end to her last dalliance, Ora hasn't been put off having a

BIKER GIRL "I love this look. I was at the airport after being in Thailand to shoot a music video for Snoop Lion's new video 'Torn Apart'. I'm wearing a Bally oversize ruffle jacket, Jil Sander knit hat, Monika Chiang leather pants and Alexander Wang lace-up leather boots – they're my favourites. Oh, and Tom Ford glasses and a Hermès Birkin bag."

boyfriend. "It's a terrible feeling, being lonely," she says. "It just feels like, I don't know... I'm still a girl. I'd love a boyfriend. But it's hard when they're not in the industry. I wouldn't care what he did as long as he made me laugh. I love laughing."

In an ideal world, she'd like to trade one Rob for another – she has the hots for Robert Pattinson. "I never even knew he was British," she admits, giggling at the thought she might bump into him in her home town. "I thought he was American!"

But until Mr Charming (or Mr *Twilight*) comes along, she's concentrating on her career and being "a little sponge", soaking up all the guidance Jay-Z and Beyoncé give her. "They're the best role models to have," she says. "She's my idol and Jay's a genius. They're always going to be two people who will tell me the truth and are very open and want to help. They were the people who



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asked if my sister and my friends could be on the road with me. So my sister, Elena, manages me, and my friend Kyle is my stylist."

While Ora may be keeping it real on the road with her friends and family, she's picked up a few showbiz mates, too. Singer Ellie Goulding is her fitness inspiration. "I run for 15 minutes a day, three times a week, but Ellie can run forever. Her figure is insane, she's so toned."

Cara Delevingne, the model and London socialite, is her bestie (or "wifey" as Ora affectionately calls her). "She's so cool. I love that girl," she says. "We met at a festival a few years ago and we have a lot of mutual friends. She's just one of those people I really connected with. We have such a laugh together. It's funny, as we're from two different worlds. She's from a 'great name' and I'm from a council estate in Ladbroke Grove. It's nice to know that two people from two different backgrounds could really get along. She's the coolest bitch ever. I love her a lot."

Delevingne and Ora are often spotted holding hands and being affectionate with each other. "I feel like we're both at the peak of our careers but we never expect anyone to care about us," Ora says. "It's the same as any other girls my age posting stuff on Facebook – we mess around and we tweet funny pictures. It's all a good laugh."

Ora's style inspiration comes from Gwen Stefani – someone she'd rather be compared to than Rihanna. "I don't understand the Rihanna comparisons," she frowns. "She's a great artist, and thank God I get compared to someone who's great, but the only similarity is that we're from the same [record label] team. I'm over it."

"Gwen Stefani inspired me to dye my hair blonde and start wearing red lipstick. When I met her for the first time I was so star-struck. I was like, 'Shit, f*ck, shit, f*ck! Sorry, when I get nervous I swear!' But after that, I got to hang out with No Doubt at the EMAs [MTV Europe Music Awards]. Gwen's so cool!"

Just like her style idol, Ora is fast attracting a big fashion fan-base for her out-there attire. When we meet, she's wearing white leather 3.1 Phillip Lim pants, Superga trainers, a Maison Martin Margiela T-shirt

and a vintage black-leather jacket from London's Portobello Market. Her large Balenciaga earrings are pulling on her lobes – "My ears are so sore!"

To date, the singer has 14 tattoos, including the Greek goddess Aphrodite on her left arm. "Aphrodite needs a date, so I'm going to get Hercules on the other arm," she says. "I love tattoos. I think they're beautiful."

It's clear 2013 could be Ora's busiest year yet and she talks passionately about going back to her birthplace, now named Kosovo, where she filmed her 'Shine Ya Light' video last year.

"It made me feel so special," she says earnestly. "I have a lot of plans. I'm working with UNICEF. I wanted to give kids places

POP GODDESS "This is when my relationship with Pucci started. Peter Dundas helped me with this dress. I trusted him, as I love his work. He makes women look nice, as well as sexy. One thing led to another and I asked him to do my whole tour. His sketches were amazing. I said, 'You know I'm not that skinny, right?'"

to play instead of being on the streets. My dad said to me, 'Do you realise what you're capable of, that you have opportunities to help a nation?' He sat there and spoke to me about it for hours. I'm really taking my role seriously. I want to raise awareness and invest into homes for orphans, which can be run by my family members. Nothing is finalised yet, but we have sketches. We'll take one step at a time. I'm only a singer – I'm not trying to save the world or anything – but I just want to help a few people."

For now, there's her second album to finish and her current tour Down Under. "I love it," she says of this country. "Aussies are nice and chilled. I think it's because you're on the other side of the planet and you get all the bad news a day later."

As she catches my eye, she giggles at her own joke and our joint amusement is all the encouragement she needs to laugh her way into a wheezy crescendo. ●

Catch Rita Ora at Future Music Festival next weekend. Visit futuremusicfestival.com.au
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