

#legend

Luxury Fast-Forward
June 2017
HK\$60

hashtaglegend.com

Rita Ora





rita

As RITA ORA prepares to focus once more on her music, the all-rounder tells SARAH ENGSTRAND how she gets real about the important things in life

Photographer / Ricky Lo Styling / Kieran Ho

Jacket _ izzue
Dress _ N°21
Parentesi Hamata high jewellery necklace and bracelet in white gold with diamonds _ Bulgari

RITA ORA is among Britain's biggest celebrities, loved for her attitude and her range as an entertainer. She featured on tracks with Drake and Craig David, and vied to be Britain's representative at the Eurovision Song Contest late in the 2000s, making her name as a singer. The big time beckoned and in the five years since 2012, she has seared her name across every centimetre of cyberspace as a singer, all-round performer, and star of the big and small screens.



Hoodie _ IZZUE COLLECTION
Skirt _ J.W. Anderson
Boots _ IRO
Serpenti Inspirations necklace in white gold
with sapphires and diamonds _ Bulgari



Dress _ MSGM
Skirt _ N°21

She was everywhere, presenting on *The X Factor*, *The Voice UK* and *America’s Next Top Model*. As an actress, she’s held her own in the *Fifty Shades of Grey* trilogy and has another movie on the way. As a fashion designer, she’s spent years working to devise product lines for Adidas and Tezenis. Ora’s background helps keep her grounded. Her parents were Albanian refugees who left Kosovo during the war there in the 1990s. Their sacrifices are always with her.

We met Ora at her suite in the W Hong Kong. She’s hungry for success ahead of a new album and, well, just hungry. She invited us in to share a veritable carbohydrate castle of pizza, burgers, quesadillas and French fries. In between bites we talked about music, sexuality and her quarter-life crisis.

Tell us a little about your upcoming second album.

The new album is amazing because I put my whole heart and soul into it. It’s the most real album I’ve ever been a part of. I’ve had a lot of phases with this album, you know, a lot of characters. I always used to think being vulnerable was embarrassing, until I started using it in my songs and now I can’t stop being vulnerable. I think the vulnerable side of me is the best part. It’s the best thing I could have ever done.

Do you feel like the vulnerability helps people to relate to you?

I never thought I could be vulnerable until I was a part of the writing process. With this album, I improved as a songwriter and I was able to explore myself. It’s not just about, “Oh, who is Rita dating?” anymore. You know what I’m saying? I felt like that was a real achievement for me, to take a step back and just write some solid songs that me and my friends would like to listen to.

You’re almost a decade into your career now...

What? Wow, I’m old.

How old are you?

Twenty-six. November 26, 1990. I’m industry old.

It seems like you’ve grown a lot, especially over the past few years.

Thank you. I mean, I’d be freaked out if I was exactly the same. It’s so weird when people say that, “Wow. She’s changed drastically.” But it’s like, no, I’ve just grown up a bit. Everyone changes a little bit.

You’ve spoken before about the quarter-life crisis. How do you feel now?

I feel good, thanks. I don’t know if I made that word up but it exists. I Googled it. A lot of my friends have told me it’s an age where you’re not old enough and you’re not young enough. You’re in limbo and your transferring closer to the 30s. It doesn’t matter what you’re doing in life, it happens. I think it was just a phase I was going through where I didn’t know what was happening.

Was it that crisis that drove you to diversify so much? You’ve designed a lingerie collection, shoe collections, you’ve hosted television shows and been in movies.

No, I just love working. For me, it wasn’t a work thing that I was in a crisis. It was a personal thing. It was non-stop since I was 21. When I hit 25, I was already three or four years in with no break and no holiday and I thought to myself, “Woah”. It was the first time it all came to me and it was intense. But I got over it.

How did you get over it?

I spent time with my family. I went home, went back to scratch and I ate what I wanted. I just enjoyed myself.

“When I hit 25, I was already three or four years in with no break and no holiday and I thought to myself, ‘Woah’. It was the first time it all came to me and it was intense”

RITA ORA

The new album; do you have a favourite song?

There’s a song called *Girls* which, at the first listen, you’ll be, like, “Oh, wow. She’s definitely letting us know that she likes girls.” But it’s not that. It is called *Girls* because I have features with my actual friends on it, like Charli XCX, who is one of my bestest friends. The song is basically about females complimenting other females and supporting each other. Feminist isn’t a scary word but sometimes people are afraid to use it because it’s been used in, like, a very aggressive context. But it’s not really about that. When Katy Perry sang *I Kissed a Girl*, it wasn’t necessarily her saying, “Guys, I’m a lesbian”. It was more about feeling empowered to be outspoken and free to choose and pick, and say things. That’s what *Girls* is about and it’s really exciting. I’m not the only one doing it. A lot of people have been doing it throughout the years. I’m just joining the pack.

Are we talking about Cara Delevingne?

What? No. I’m just talking about girls in general, girls supporting each other.

When you wifed Cara, that kicked off a huge storm.

Yeah, I think it’s safe to say we started a trend. I think we did. She’s one of my faves but that’s just another era. We were on fire then.

Was it ever sexual, that relationship? It was ambiguous.

Well, that’s the point.



Hoodie _ N°21
Jacket _ ANN DEMEULEMEESTER
Dress _ Simone Rocha

“I’ve always had an opinion on my actions but now I get the luxury of choice. I can pick and choose what I do, and I can say no. But at the beginning – hell, yeah – you’d better do everything. You’d better do every interview known to man”

RITA ORA

You seem comfortable with your sexuality.

It’s just the way people are. You choose who you are and who you want to be. And that’s just who I am. I don’t judge anyone. I don’t have opinions unless they’re on myself. I just do what I feel. I really react off of feel and instinct.

Do you think you are your harshest critic?

One hundred per cent, yes. There’s always something wrong. I can always find something wrong with something.

You’ve spoken about building an empire before. What do you envision yours to be?

I just really want to make something so that I can retire and be all right. You know what I mean? My parents have always been really futuristic humans, always thinking about the future. And we were just raised like that. I didn’t know what I meant by empire when I was just starting out. I didn’t know. I did *America’s Next Top Model* and Tyra, she created an empire. I really respect people who do that because it just makes you look really multitasking, you know? I mean, to be honest, I can’t even pass my driving test, let alone start an empire. I’m like a man: I focus on one thing. No offence. I’ve got a bit of an Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder about this. I’ve become obsessed with creating something because I’ve got a family and all that. My parents, I want them to be happy.

What’s your personal style?

I think I’m still very inspired by the streets. I grew up in West London and we were a middle class family. We were just lucky to have each other. You know what I’m saying? I was really inspired by streetwear and that culture. Sometimes you look at things and say, “Oh, I really want that”. But you can’t afford that, so you adapt. The streetwear styles were always something I could fall back on.

Has your style changed much over the past seven years?

Maybe due to, ahem, the fact that I can afford something now but not really, no. It’s just expanded a bit more. I haven’t forgotten where I came from. I used to make things from scratch and people used to be, like, “Woah! What’s that?” And I’d be, like, “Gucci.”

What are your favourite brands now?

I really love Dries Van Noten and Adidas because we’ve been working with them for 15 collections.

Are you wearing your Adidas now?

Not these, these are Superstars. They’ve been my favourite model since I was young. People call them shelters but they’re actually Superstars. They never go out of style.

It’s interesting that you said Dries because he’s not usually at the top of the list.

You know what it is? It’s the simplicity. People are really surprised by my knowledge of fashion. That really confuses people. But I like to know people’s stories, and the stories behind the brands.

Do you research the brand and designer before you buy something?

No, I just do it because I want to know.

I’m not going to go into details of your personal life...

No, do. Media training is one of my fortes now.

Have you found your success intimidates potential partners?

I think I’ve stopped looking at the other person and started looking more at myself. It’s also just a timing thing. I’ve been told by other people in the industry that it’s more of a “you” thing and you’ll just know when you’re ready. I guess that’s just what I’m waiting for.

It seems like you’re holding the reins on your career and your life.

Yeah, but it’s not been like that the whole time.

Did you ever feel lost?

One hundred per cent. I didn’t think I was at that point. I guess that’s when my quarter-life crisis situation happened. It was only in the beginning of this album process that I started taking control again. I’ve always had an opinion on my actions and decisions, but now I get the luxury of choice. I can pick and choose what I do, and I can say no sometimes. But at the beginning – hell, yeah – you’d better do everything. You’d better do every interview known to man.

You’ve collaborated with some of the greats, such as Carrie Fisher.

I was with her the day before she got on that flight and it’s just crazy. She drank a lot of Coca-Cola and we were, like, loving life on Coca-Cola. We were laughing, the scene was amazing and she helped me a lot. And that was it. I hope people enjoy the movie, *Wonderwell*. It’s a cool movie.

Sweater _ izzue
Dress _ Maison Margiela
Serpenti high jewellery necklace
and bracelet in white and yellow gold
with diamonds and rubies _ Bulgari



Coat _ Maison Margiela
Top and skirt _ N°21
Bra _ Tezenis
Monete high jewellery necklace in
pink gold with bronze coin, sapphires,
emeralds and diamonds _ Bulgari

“I didn’t realise this at the time but it was a big deal. It was crazy. And no one had ever done anything like it before. I mean, the president was there. I never thought I’d say this but I really was, like, ‘Is this how Michael Jackson felt?’”

RITA ORA

You’re from a close family. Do they read all of the stories about you?

Yes, all of it. They send me links. At the end of the day, they’re still parents, you know? They’ll message me, like, “Is this true?” And I’m, like, “No, mum, I did not eat 20 cupcakes at once” or whatever it is. The headlines can just be ridiculous.

You play Christian Grey’s sister in the *Fifty Shades* trilogy. What does your mum think of that?

She loves it. She went to go see them with my dad and my little brother. Mum loves those films. She’s already asking, “When’s the next one?”

Your mother is a therapist but her qualifications didn’t transfer over when she came to Britain as a refugee, right?

No, she had to start from scratch. And she was beating breast cancer while she was studying. She’d go through chemo and still study. It was 10 years ago. She’s just in the best place ever and has gone through some shit. She’s my favourite person. I can talk about her all day. I see her as often as I can and, trust me, she stays in touch.

You’ve said that everything you do is for your mother.

Yeah.

But what about yourself?

I do it for me, too, but also for her.

You were born in Kosovo and were recently appointed as an ambassador.

Oh my God, I know. How crazy is that? We’re in the process of building schools. It’s going to take eight years. We’re finding sponsors and funds right now. I’ve been working with UNICEF for a long time. They’ve been one of the most consistent supporters of Kosovo throughout the war. I think it’s really important to give back to my country because there’s a lot of talent there that people don’t see.

How often do you go back?

I don’t go back as much as I could or should because I work a lot. And that’s another reason why I want to build something. I shot *Shine Your Light* there. I didn’t realise this at the time but it was a really big deal. It was crazy. And no one had ever done anything like it before. I felt like Michael Jackson. I mean, the president was there. I really never thought I’d say this but I really was, like, “Is this how Michael Jackson felt?”

Are you happy?

Yeah. Well, I’m content. I’m calm. I feel good. #

renown / fame



*Hair / Cesar Ramirez
Make-up / Cassie Bell
Location / W Hong Kong*

Sweater and mesh top _ N°21