

Julia Cumming started her first band when she was 13, but her obsession with music began long before that. "My earliest memory is wanting to be in the Beatles," recalls the 19-yearold New York native while sipping an iced coffee in the lobby of SoHo's Mercer Hotel. She's wearing a vintage floral kimono dress that she bought in L.A. ("It was only, like, three dollars," she proudly proclaims), a '90s-style tattoo choker, and a black Saint Laurent bag – a gift from the French house and its creative director, Hedi Slimane, for whom she's modeled that path, feeling it was "the safe route, and I don't want to deserve it. I'm like, When are they gonna figure out that I'm since 2014. Her cherry red nail polish is chipped, her hair is play it safe." Now, she sings and plays bass for Sunflower not pretty?" dyed dusty pink, and her eyebrows are newly bleached. "I felt like, fuck it. I'm a hairy woman. I have big eyebrows, and I wanted to see what happens when you take them away," she explains. "My hair is fake – I bleached it blonde for the first time when my band was breaking up and I thought the

world was over and I didn't want to look at my face anymore. Now my eyebrows are fake."

She doesn't say this with the whine of an angsty teenager, but with the wisdom of an old soul. The musician-cum-model has lived many lives in the fewer than two decades she's been alive. She and her first band, Supercute!, opened for Kate Nash before Cumming had even graduated high school. She trained to be a classical opera singer, but strayed from Bean, a psychedelic rock group comprised of Cumming, Nick Kivlen, and Jacob Faber, best known for their tune "Tame Impala." The musician has all the attitude of a born-andbred New Yorker, having grown up on 14th Street between Avenues A and B, but none of the cynicism. Fueled by passion,

Cumming is a true 21st-century rocker, and it's easy to understand why Slimane, who famously flocks to the music world for inspiration and campaign faces, is enamored with the 5'11" beauty.

Cumming, however, doesn't see it so plainly. "Working with Hedi and Saint Laurent has taken things to a level that I could not have imagined," she admits with a bashful smile. "In a weird way, I feel like I've tricked everybody, or that I don't

On the contrary, it's Cumming's raw, I-just-don't-care aesthetic that makes her such an appealing model. In addition to walking the runway and posing for Saint Laurent, she has featured in such publications as Vogue Italia, i-D, Dazed & Confused, and, of course, V. Her unapologetic sense of



JACKET **DIESEL BLACK GOLD** SHIRTS AND EARRING (WORN AS BROOCH) MIU MIU SKIRT STELLA McCARTNEY BOOTS J.W. ANDERSON HAT CLYDE SCARF **Long Xu**



TURTLENECK (UNDERNEATH) PRADA EARRING MIU MIU

self is a refreshing antidote to the glossy perfection we've in music, it's so easy to be objectified. If you're a man, you're come to expect from the fashion and music industries, and her innate feminist stance sets a strong example for her fans. "On shoots, I sometimes get in trouble for not shaving," she laughs. "It's not a political thing – I guess it becomes a political thing – I just don't like it. I've just said, Fuck it, because I like the idea of being a little gross."

On a more serious note, Cumming is often frustrated with the way women are treated in the worlds of music and you're living your life!" modeling. "As a woman modeling, despite the obvious power dynamic, you're being celebrated. A beautiful woman is one of the most valuable commodities on the planet. When you're a woman, you're taught from birth that you should be pretty. But when you are, people want to tear you down for using [your looks] as an advantage," she laments. "And as a woman

making music. But if you're a woman, you're a woman making music. I and people younger than me are right on the cusp of where it's changing, because I think the world is less interested in hearing about it – we've been talking about it for so long. But still, people come up to me after shows – dudes – and they're like, Oh, I've never seen a girl play bass like that. And I'm like, The fucking nerve! I don't understand the way

If change is imminent, Cumming is doing her part to make it happen. "I just want to be a hardworking model and a hardworking musician who pushes myself in both of those fields. I think if I can do that really genuinely and really authentically, that's rock and roll. And no one can take that away from me."

release of Sunflower Bean's new album. Out early next year, the LP, according to Cumming, is a departure from the band's heavy, oft performance-driven past. "We worked with my friend Matt Molnar from the band Friends, and he helped us bring out a lot of sides that we hadn't really tapped into. There are a lot of harmonies on the record, and it has a lot of listenability. It's about the songs, and bringing some of the beauty out. I think people are going to be surprised."

DRESS AND SHOES **CÉLINE**

PANTS DSQUARED2

When asked whether she prefers modeling or music, Cumming is quick to reply. "I think people want you to choose," she says. "Modeling has definitely become a form of artistic expression for me. But music has been a ruling factor in my life since I was able to do it. And one thing I've decided is that I'm going to be making music forever. Until The next step in Cumming's pursuit of greatness is the the day I die." KATHARINE K. ZARRELLA