

Issue 8

Bleta Rexha, 26
From Brooklyn, NY
Lives in New York, NY
Photography by Indra Cesarine
This page:
Bebe wears a viscose cutout
black dress and leather belt
with metal hardware by
Yigal Azrouel.
Opposite page:
She wears a leopard jumpsuit
by Christian Siriano, and a
jacket adorned with metal
studs by Diesel.
Fashion Editor Indra Cesarine
Make-up by Lisa Aharon
Hair by Hanjee

BEBE
REXHA





"I can never put my happiness or my health behind fame or money. I don't want that. It's not worth it to me at all." Bebe Rexha has been in the music industry long enough to learn that it's not as glamorous as it's chalked up to be, laughing, "I stayed in my first five-star hotel, and it had bedbugs in it, I swear on everything!" Though her solo career is still in its infancy - with her forthcoming debut album due out this year - she's actually a veteran, having worked as a songwriter for David Guetta, Pitbull and Tinashe, and was the brain behind Eminem & Rihanna's Grammy-winning track, "The Monster."

Between her Albanian heritage and childhood in Staten Island, her music pulls a variety of cultural influences. "One of my best friends in High School was from Spain, and I had another friend who was Haitian, and one who was Italian...I think being in New York City and there being so many different cultures and people - they're obviously influenced by their own music and their families' music...and that influences me! And being Albanian definitely influences my music as well, specifically in my melodies. It is very Gypsy-esque."

She launched her career after winning "Best Teen Songwriter" at The National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences' "Grammy Day." When the competition was announced at her school, she got a "girl group" together, and cut her very first track. One twist of fate led to another. "I found myself in a studio where Pete Wentz was in the other room and he overheard me singing." Wentz, formerly of Fall Out Boy, was in the process of forming his side band, Black Cards. "I got a call in my Italian class to be a part of the group and to sign a record deal, and I just got up and walked out. I was like 'I'm getting the fuck out of here,'" she laughs. Like many early career choices, that era was not meant to last for her. "I was so young, and I traveled so much, and I didn't really have a friend with me, you know, even though [Wentz] was a big brother to me - he was going through his own things. I took it really personally and that's when I started really feeling very sad. Going from hotel room to show to hotel room can be incredibly lonely, especially when you're supposed to be living the dream. You think everything is do or die, but it's really not...I mean, fuck, somebody finally believed in me. It was like, 'Publishers want to sign me, labels want to sign me...Fuck, I can travel the world. I can meet so many more people. I'm building a fan base.'" But when it started to affect her health, she made the hard decision to go solo.

Luckily it was the right move for Bebe, both creatively and emotionally. "[Now] I can paint my own canvás. I can say whatever I want to say, I can sing what I want to sing. I can do whatever I want. It's like the most freeing, most fulfilling thing ever." Despite years of experience behind her, she's only now releasing her debut album, which will undoubtedly show us a whole new side of her. "It's a really long time in the making. I really love every type of music. So my album is every little part, all the years, flashing through my head...I'm telling a story in every song...I sing about learning. You know when you're little, you think everything in the world is so great, and as you get older, you're like 'Wow, this is not what I expected.'"