

VIBE **VIV** **en**

10

**LIPSTICKS
YOU NEED
TO OWN**

★★★
**MICHELLE
OBAMA
2012**

**CUFFING
SEASON
DOWN
WITH LOVE
LOCKDOWN?**

Brandy

**"I FELT
LIKE IT WAS OVER
FOR ME."**



SKIN-TIGHT AND SPORTY FALL TRENDS • EMELI SANDÉ



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As Emeli Sande's wistful inflections sweep across the pond, the locals are checking for this Scottish import. Consider this advance warning your late pass.

Mission Statement

We said a new style of sexy, right? Well, here it is: VIBE Vixen Digital Magazine, all equipped with sophisticated design and youthful color schemes. Don't fret, this new way to digest Vixen is still the mag it always was--a full-fledged, one-stop shop for style trends, beauty must-haves, exclusive celeb tales and need-to-know information for the young, burgeoning woman of color.

As one myself, I was never the type to pay an immense amount of attention to the political theatre. To me, it was a court of jesters; a gamut of liars under the guise of community-serving citizens executing their personal agendas, not serving the masses equally and fair. These deep-seated feelings were my Olympic anti-government torch, that is, until President Obama's "Yes We Can" chants ignited a thirst for change. He brought the highbrow discussions to a level I could understand and support.

Four years from his history-making Inauguration, Mr. President still excites that unshakable will to push forward toward his vision of the American dream. The best part? He offers every individual--you, me and that other guy--to share it with him, incorporating the majority's personal agendas into his own. Not only does he preach the gospel of hard

work, perseverance and love for one's brother, but his partner Michelle Obama also has risen as a voice for the dream of the American woman, specifically the African American woman. Her next four years in office are imperative (see: "Standing O").

As I serve my first official term as EIC of VIBE Vixen, it's easier to understand that political stage on which politicians stand, thanks to the constant debates, third party affairs and power trips of the publishing biz. (Trust me, there's politics in everything!). As a leader of any group, it's about becoming a master of checks and balances, evaluating the ideas of everyone involved and finding that common ground--no easy feat. I sympathize with the Prez and his First Lady; they've got quite a road ahead of them.

Brandy is anxiously awaiting to serve her next term, too. As you cop Two Eleven, balance that with learning political jargon, picking a side and hitting the polls! You may not understand the firestorm of global policy, the intricacies of healthcare or even what GOP means (Vote Director Stefanie Brown helps us with that.), but it's our duty to help the man who "gets it" back into the Oval.

The Feminine (Celeb) Mystique

In politics, celebrity stumping can mean major endorsements, big bucks and decisive votes for one candidate. From passionate declarations at this year's DNC to breast cancer walks, here's a toast to seven ladies focused on enlightening women on the political platform

—CARMEN SHARDAE JOBSON

ALICIA KEYS

Since being the pianist golden child of R&B, Alicia Keys has remained present in some shape or form in politics, and particularly through charities like being the spokesperson for Keep A Child Alive, an organization which provides relief for men, women, and children living with AIDS/HIV in Africa and India

9%

KERRY WASHINGTON

She spoke in honor of the Declaration's first words "We the People," passionately addressing the DNC crowd about not becoming "invisible."

7%

MICHELLE OBAMA

Mrs. Obama has served as the swan song to her husband's hopeful re-election. While she touched on topics such as like women's rights, humble beginnings, providing for the children of the future and education, her main focus was the general promise that dignity and hard work still matters in the name of the American spirit

35%

14%

EVA LONGORIA

As co-chairperson of Obama's re-election campaign, the ex-Desperate Housewives actress delivered an amiable DNC speech on behalf of the everyday Americans determined to fight for their American Dream.

15%

ROSARIO DAWSON

After reading about high a percentage of Latinos were literally disenfranchised by not signing up to vote, it didn't take her long to co-found Voto Latino, a non-profit organization that rounds up the troops and gets not just those of her community to register, but everyone to aspire to vote

20%

BEYONCÉ

From her "At Last" rendition at the Inaugural Ball to continuing her vocal appreciation of Michelle Obama in letters, Bey is aware (and constantly communicates) that our country is in good hands

Direct Address

Musical divas aren't just pretty faces--some love to challenge the status quo. Vixen runs down a few chicks who've taken strong political stances in song

-ALIYA FAUST



"DEAR MR. PRESIDENT" (I'M NOT DEAD, 2006) - PINK
THE ISSUE: POVERTY & LGBT RIGHTS

WHAT SHE SAID: "What do you feel when you see all the homeless on the street? Who do you pray for at night before you go to sleep? ... What kind of father would take his own daughter's rights away. And what kind of father might hate his own daughter if she were gay."



"MYSTERY OF INIQUITY" (2002) - LAURYN HILL
THE ISSUE: GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION

WHAT SHE SAID: "...Expert witness (the paid authority) made a priority to deceive the majority, of disinterested peers

dodging duty for years. Hating the process waiting to be returned to their careers. Do we expect the system made for the elect to possibly judge correct? Properly serve and protect? Materially corrupt, spiritually amuck, oblivious to the cause, prosperously bankrupt. Blind leading the blind. Guilty never defined. Filthy as swine, a generation pure in its own mind."



"SUNSHOWERS" (ARULAR, 2005) - M.I.A.
THE ISSUE: WAR

WHAT SHE SAID: "Semi-9 and sniper'd him. On that wall they posted him. They cornered him, and then just murdered him. He told them he didn't know them. He wasn't there, they know didn't know him. They showed him a picture then, 'Ain't that you with the Muslims?'"

"SELF DESTRUCTION" [VERSE 7] (LIVE HARDCORE WORLDWIDE, 1991) - MS. MELODIE
THE ISSUE: UNITY



WHAT SHE SAID: "If we want to develop and grow to another level, we can't be guinea pigs for the devil. The enemy knows, they're no fools, because everyone knows that hip-hop rules. So we gotta get a grip and grab what's wrong. The opposition is weak and rap is strong."



"THE OTHER CHEEK" (GANGSTA BLUES, 2004) - TANYA STEPHENS
THE ISSUE: TRUST & POVERTY

WHAT SHE SAID: "Providing no jobs and telling us stop the crime is like beating a child and telling him not to cry ... Do you expect me to turn the other cheek, taste my tears and admit defeat? Do you expect me to listen when you speak? You never practice what you preach. Do expect me to still come out and vote? No matter what happens we're always broke."

Power Forward

National African American Vote Director of Obama For America Stefanie Brown comes from a long line of working towards social change. Here, the 31-year-old Howard Alumni speaks on the importance of getting out and rocking your vote

NATIONAL AFRICAN AMERICAN VOTE DIRECTOR OF OBAMA FOR AMERICA STEFANIE BROWN COMES FROM A LONG LINE OF WORKING TOWARDS SOCIAL CHANGE.

Here, the 31-year-old Howard Alumni speaks on the importance of getting out and rocking your vote.

I joined the campaign in February 2011. Before, I worked for the NAACP as the National Field Director where I also oversaw our youth and college division, so it was just a natural transition. We, as a campaign, want as many people who can legally vote to be able to do so, and we are about expanding and not limiting access to the polls. We have a really great voter protection/education online hub, called gottavote.com and it's a chance for the community to go online and get specific information about their state. They can find out polling location, open/close times, what kind of I.D. they need, etc. The biggest push is getting out into the community daily to ensure that our folks are educated on being prepared.

The importance of the African American woman vote is significant. In 2008, African American women voted at the highest percentage than any other demographic in the country, and AA young people followed close



behind in second place. We've consistently seen that African American women are engaged and educated about the issues because they live them every day. Whether it's focusing on education or healthcare, we know that African American women have a lot at stake with this election.

Obamacare, which gives 7 million more African Americans access to healthcare because of the affordable care act, involves new plans that will include expanded access to preventive care, helping 41 million African Americans prevent and treat diseases and conditions that affect our community at a higher rate, including heart disease, stroke, cancer, asthma and diabetes. President Obama also believes that all children, regardless of their zip code,

should have access to a quality education. He has worked to keep teachers in the classroom, his initiatives have helped spur 46 states to raise standards and he has doubled funding for Pell grants, which support an additional 200,000 African American students. Meanwhile, Mitt Romney has promised to repeal Obamacare on day one, has plans to expand private-school vouchers, which have failed to raise student achievement, and he supports a budget that would slash Pell grants.

I'm most hopeful that our community continues to understand how important our voice and our vote is in this election and that we get out and vote. At the end of the day, if we don't exercise that right to vote at the polls, then we won't make the impact that we know we need to make. President Barack Obama has put so many policies in place to help us move forward, and I think it's important that folks know the power of their voice. We need to get our families involved; no one should be sitting at home on Election Day. If our voice was important in 2008, it's critical in 2012. My greatest challenge every day is thinking, "What can we do as a campaign to better empower the community and get our president back in for another four years?" We don't have to wait until Election Day to make sure that our voices are heard. —As told to **Jazmine Henley-Brown**

Lip Lock

The shade of lipstick you rock can shift your entire mood. Snatch up these 10 tones, from sophisticated to sultry, to prepare your pretty puckers for fall —ASHLEY JETER



1. Latte Matte Sophisticated Vixen

If the rest of your makeup reads dramatic, rock a nude lip like Smashbox's Be Legendary Latte Matte, a subtle honey hue. Try this lippy with a peachy bronzer and blush duo for contouring to pop your features.

2. Satin Dark Brown Warm & Cozy Vixen

Pay homage to the good ole days, by sporting a Nia Long-inspired Love Jones lip. Get the look with

Makeup Forever's Satin Dark Brown, a spunkier alternative to a nude lippy.

3. Night Vixen In Charge

It takes a girl with an "I give no f*cks" attitude to carry a black lip. Night by Ka'Oir commands attention and will have everyone hanging on to your every word.

4. Rude Girl Playful Vixen

Playing hooky? Rude Girl sports a deep purple finish even Prince would envy.

▶▶▶▶ Dark Side, MAC Cosmetics \$14.50 Night, Ka'Oir \$15.99 Rebel, MAC Cosmetics \$14.50 Rude Girl, Ka'Oir \$15.99 Cyber, MAC Cosmetics \$14.50 Satin Dark Brown, Make Up For Ever \$19.00 Ruby Woo, MAC Cosmetics \$14.50 Latte Matte, Smashbox Be Legendary Lipstick \$19.00 Morange, MAC Cosmetics \$14.50 Please Me, MAC Cosmetics \$14.50

MAC Effect

The MUA-friendly cosmetics titan has specifically garnered an insane amount of Vixen addicts. Paint your lips with fall favorites from the MAC Class

1. Rebel Sultry Vixen

Rebel is the perfect date night lippy. Chances are, your dude's not down for a mouthful of lipstick mid-smooch. But Rebel, the perfect date night lippy, boasts a moisturizing, makeout-ready satin finish and a berry hue that screams seductress.

2. Dark Side Vampy Vixen

Craving an Azealia Banks-esque vamp look? This deep burgundy, amplified creme complements any autumn ensemble.

3. Cyber Gothic Vixen

Consider this purplish-black satin hue an amazing night lip perfect for pairing with cat eyeliner and a peachy blush to soften your look.

4. Morange Vibrant Vixen

Think you can only go dark for fall? Wrong. Spice up your wardrobe with a neon orange lip. With its pungent splash of color, Morange's amplified sheen demands multiple gawks.

5. Please Me Sassy Vixen

While pinks are normally worn in warmer seasons, Please Me leaves a warm and cozy impression and can be worn year-round for work or play.

6. Ruby Woo

Vintage Hollywood Vixen Feeling sophisticated chic, patriotic or minimalist? Ruby Woo works for almost any skin tone. Pair this matte finish with bronzer for an effortless but sassy façade.



Lustful Leather

Not just for bikers and goths. Try this new texture basic in your style repertoire —**RACHEL FRANCOIS**

IF MUSIC HAD TO CHOOSE ONE FABRIC TO STITCH ITS UNIFORM, IT'D BE LEATHER.

The rugged material has dominated the music world's wardrobe—it concurrently screams luxury and rebellion. Think back to Run-D.M.C. in their iconic black leather blazers and pants, busting through doors in “King of Rock” or Michael Jackson in his studded red leather jacket in “Beat It.” Something about the sheen of this tough textile reads effortlessly badass; which is why it's a staple for male and female musicians.

Like a Tity-Boi-to-2 Chainz rebirth, leather has resurfaced on the fashion main stage in a big way. This past summer, warm weather leather options were seen on the likes of Kanye West in the form of tanks and skinny pants and on sartorial line-stepper Rihanna, who donned leather peplum tops and shorts. Even as the leaves turn, the weather can be so unpredictable but we are sure that leather will remain in the fashion forecast.

In its many iterations, this signature seasonal trend works as a great wardrobe accent to transition into frigid months. Copping a leather jacket is the most traditional way to infuse your wardrobe with the sleek style staple. Draped or motorcycle silhouettes instantly modernize the classic dimension while layering a leather jacket over jeans and tee adds a touch of audacity. Conversely, pairing it with an evening dress will give your sophisticated ensemble a nonchalant downtown quality.

If a full leather jacket doesn't suit you, opt for outerwear with contrasting leather sleeves to bring a more structured look to an otherwise loose fitting cotton or wool top. Our YMCMB compatriot, Lil Tuncchi reminds us that leather can be so soft but it can feel other ways too. For that extra it factor, score textured details in quilted or woven appearances.

Who says leather is only worn in black? Take on cobalt blue or fire engine red hues to liven up colorless ensembles.

Whether you like it cropped, slouchy, skinny, tailored, or stretchy, you can have the leather pant speak to your personal style. Achieve rocker chic by wearing a graphic t-shirt with your steez of choice. For our anti-animal cruelty chicks, a wax-coated



pant is a great alternative to give the illusion of a leathered finish without the flour bomb.

Minus the whips and latex, over-the-knee or thigh-high boots are conventional but sexy ways to also incorporate the quintessential leather element into your style repertoire.

For a chic work friendly option, pair a sheath leather dress or pencil skirt with a blazer or blouse, which transitions into after-work ensembles perfect for client dinners or margaritas with your BFFs. Don't keep leather exclusive to your handbags and shoes but experiment with its versatility in other areas of your wardrobe. Consider it the investment piece of the season and maybe that'll help justify purchasing a covetable pair of those leather jeggings.

Killer Kicks: A NEW ALTITUDE FOR THE HIGH-TOP SNEAKER

Sneaker wedges are the ultimate style for sporty chic —RACHEL FRANCOIS



A HEELED-SNEAKER MIGHT SEEM OXYMORONIC. BUT THIS HIGH-LOW HYBRID IS HAVING A MOMENT IN FASHION FOOTWEAR.

We're not advising that you play full court ball in these numbers but you can definitely pound the pavement in style and comfort. The sneaker wedge has all the elements of a traditional sneaker—laces, rubber, mesh, eyelet, Velcro strap details and funky color variations. The new design spin? A concealed wedged heel ranging between 1-4 inches that takes you from simply sporty to sporty chic.

Seasons prior, we'd be hard-pressed to find a devout stylist lacing up her kicks to hit the fashion scene. Traditional sneakers can make you look stumpy or like you're en route to spin class. Fortunately, the added heel dimension offers comfort without sacrificing style or height. Thank the woman behind the eponymous cult brand Isabel Marant.

Marant's take on the wedged sneaker transformed the tried silhouette into the must-have fashion item among celebs and fashion mavens. Alicia Keys has been spotted courtside in the

“...SNEAKERS ARE COMFORTABLE BUT NOT VERY ELEGANT. TO HAVE A LITTLE HEEL IN IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE, IT GIVES YOU LEGS - I MEAN, I KNOW WOMEN, I AM A WOMAN, SO I KNOW WHAT WE ARE SEARCHING FOR!”

popular designer shoe and if you follow actress Tracee Ellis Ross on Twitter you know she affectionately refers to her growing personal inventory as “Lzzys.” The fellas also have embraced the brand. “So I sponsor Isabel Marant,” rhymes Pusha T on The Dream’s “Dope Chick.” We also hear on Rick Ross’s “Diced Pineapple” that “her uniform Isabel Marant.”

Marant’s demurely plush hi-top kicks debuted in an assortment of colorways in leather and suede. The padded leather tongue gives ladies a modern

B-girl vibe while the gum rubber sole begs contact with a parquet floor. Although screeching in at a steep \$780, retailers still had a hard time keeping Isabel Marant’s Willow and Bekket Hi Top sneakers on the shelves; the sold out style auctions for as high as \$1000 on Ebay. In an interview with website Fashionista, Marant describes her design concept. She says, “...sneakers are comfortable but not very elegant. To have a little heel in it makes a difference, it gives you legs—I mean, I know women, I am a woman, so I know what we are searching for!”

So this is what we get when women design shoes for women—fashion and function. The combo makes the shoe ideal for performing—cue Beyoncé doing more than just a two-step in her “Love On Top” video. The playful design is exactly what Sporty Spice would have complete her girl power footwear arsenal. For a casual weekend look, pair these high top sneakers with skinny jeans, harem pants with an off the shoulder top or cozy sweater. Even chicks who rarely sport kicks can find refuge in sneaker wedges.

BUYER'S GUIDE

LUXURY BRANDS GIUSEPPE ZANOTTI AND CHLOE HAVE CHURNED OUT THEIR REPRESENTATION OF THE WEDGED SNEAKER. BUT LUCKILY, VIXENS DON'T HAVE TO BREAK THE BANK TO ACQUIRE THIS TREND

STEVE MADDEN “HILIGHT”,
\$149.95
NIKE “DUNK SKY HI” WEDGE
SNEAKER, \$120
TOPSHOP “ACROBATICS VEL-
VET WEDGE HI TOPS, \$90
ALDO “CHISM,” \$80

Pack Your Bags:

VACAY ON A BUDGET

Groupon makes lavish vacations possible in a money-tight economy—**NICOLE BROWN**



While it takes months and sometimes years to save up enough money for a decent getaway, Groupon—the daily-savings magnate that makes insanely inexpensive packages—helps you keep your mula in the bank. The commerce cash cow founder Andrew Mason and its investors Brad Keywell and Eric Lefkofsky have managed to skip the long drawn-out process of vacay planning by delivering your dream trip and its accompanying budget-friendly deals directly to the consumer’s

computer screen through its servicing operations. What started as an idea born from Mason’s cell phone contract frustrations is now a billion-dollar company that boasts over 35 million registered users in 35 countries.

The biggest advantage? Its ability to give a band of people the power to snag deals at a low price after a quick and painless sign-up process. (Plug in your location and email address to tap into a hundred-plus bargain deals at your disposal.) Each discount certificate announces how much the trip costs, the actual value of your sun-drenched, amount of money you’ve managed to save and the time you have until that buck-redeeming is gone (fine print included for all the skeptics out there). If you’re someone who needs a lot of convincing before buying, click reviews from customers who have been to your destination.ik7

Groupon’s a pro at getting you over the “tipping” point; it’s an offer you can’t resist.

PACKING TIPS

WHAT YOU REALLY DON’T NEED

Pack less stress and leave the excess at home

LAPTOP AND ELECTRONICS

For many people, a vacation is an escape from anything work-related. Packing your computer will keep you away the fun you’re supposed to be having.

JEWELRY

Yes, we know you want to look good on the beach, but you can do that without the most expensive piece of jewelry in your collection. Save yourself some tears and leave it at home.

THE EXTRA MAKEUP

whether you’re walking along a beach, hiking in the mountains or skiing atop a snow-capped mountain, you’re bound to break a sweat. Keep your skin CLEAN and HEALTHY and leave the extra foundation and eye shadows behind.

FRAGILE ITEMS

Have you seen the way your baggage is handled at the airport? Packing a glass jar or favorite pair of Chanel sunglasses probably isn’t the best idea.

1 Girl, 1 Guy

In the thick of Cuffing Season, a quintessential seven-month period where you're knee-deep in a semi but mutually beneficial relationship, you must decide: are you playing for keeps or playing for fun? —NIKI MCGLOSTER



Her: Cuffing should never be a season. The span from September to March that is known to singletons as “cuffing season” is prime time for relationships with a time stamp. A “holiday” to those in search of an on-call boo thang but one that I purposely don’t tap into my iCalendar. Before I can even pen my “Dear Summer” letter, my inbox gets flooded with seemingly nonchalant (but frequent) follow-ups from dudes who went M.I.A. in the heat. Not to be confused with a booty call or drunk text, these messages actually contain auto-corrected phrases and a personalized compliment or three. Check them on social media though and you see their timelines laced with screenshots of “thirsty” texts from females and a photo map of bad chicks on Instagram. I’m supposed to believe these single-and-mingle enthusiasts are ready for a commitment once they catch the

chills outside their door? No need for a relationship that runs on a seasonal holiday employment schedule. Now I’m not trying to knock the good guys who are trying to locate wifey and spot a potential candidate. But like Kendrick Lamar at the voting booth, I’m ghost during cuffing season. While shacking up with a cuddle buddy when the weather outside is frightful sounds appealing, it’s not enough for me to celebrate the cause. I’d rather fall for someone who didn’t wait till Fall to take interest. —ADELLE PLATON

SHE SAYS: WHILE SHACKING UP WITH A CUDDLE BUDDY WHEN THE WEATHER OUTSIDE IS FRIGHTFUL SOUNDS APPEALING, IT’S NOT ENOUGH FOR ME TO CELEBRATE THE CAUSE.

HE SAYS: WE ALL WANT SOMEBODY AT SOME POINT AND CUFFING SEASON PROVIDES THAT. JUST ENJOY YOUR CUDDY BUDDY.

Him: I don’t completely take Cuffing Season to heart, but I don’t knock it either. Both guys and girls spend summer partying, guzzling Ciroc and smashing the homies with a morning-after smile. Why not settle down for a few months and give one person your full attention—even if only until trees begin sprouting green? We all want somebody at some point and Cuffing Season provides that. Just enjoy your cuddy buddy. Don’t ask

questions or expect unrealistic long-term commitments that’ll leave you with an empty box of Kleenex. Simply put: Have fun! If you want to take the situation beyond the season, that’s your prerogative (word to Bobbi Kristina’s pops). My personal suggestion for how to really reel him in? Do your homework. The best thing a girl can do is really know the guy she’s fawning after. If a girl I was talking to looked down at my sneakers and said, “Those Aqua 8s are hot! I don’t know what the hell Jordan was thinking by making the 8.0s though,” she gets 1000 cool points automatically. The temperature is taking a roller coaster dip, so don’t get left in the cold clutching at your pride for warmth. I bet Big Sean mula that you won’t be complaining when you’re getting exactly what you want for Christmas, meeting the entire fam on Thanksgiving and getting the “D” on a consistent basis. —KEENAN HIGGINS



So Ambitious

Vixen focuses the lens on Tara Razavi's label-heavy closet, burgeoning résumé and power circle—NIKI MCGLOSTER



YOU CAN SAY THAT TARA IS A CLASS ACT. THAT IS, IF RAP VIDEOS AER THE CURRICULUM.

Founding production company Happy Place in 2008--after years of whimsical trial-and-error jobs at record labels, in television and in film--the Persian first-gen American carved out a niche that has afforded her the opportunity to work with the biz's top-tier clientele. Her hip-hop heavy résumé boasts work with award-winning pop star Jennifer Lopez ("On The Floor"), rap hitmaker Rick Ross, street politician Young Jeezy and, most recently, soul's native son Frank Ocean ("Pyramids") and crowned R&B king Usher ("Dive In"). She speaks highly of the Ocean's crazy collective as well, dotting specifically on Odd Future frontman Tyler the Creator's heightened sense of creativity: "They're amazing. I can't say enough good things about them. Tyler is a genius in his own right in so many ways. The amount of comfort and confident he has. He can walk in a room with President Obama, dap him up and say whatever comes to his mind."

How exactly did the "Pyramids"-producer get familiar with the right side of the velvet rope? By keeping cool on the party scene. The Sagittarius-born beauty ditched the rigid law school route--to the chagrin of her Iranian folks--and became a full-time student of the music industry. Though it's easy to overdose on the fast life, she zeroed in on the blueprint of success. "People were in my ear like, 'You need to network, you need to go to parties,' but for me, it was all about the work."

Trust, while she was buried under the rules and regulations of her business-minded mentors, she was double majoring in fashion, finding joy in effortless, high end style.

Albeit having to flex her bark and a little bite from time to time, it's clear this leading lady has found her rightful happy place.

VIXEN: HOW DID YOU GET TO THE PLACE WHERE YOU WANTED TO START YOUR OWN BUSINESS?

TARA RAZAVI: On some level, I always knew that I was going to have my own company. If you asked me my goals when I was a kid, it was never simple. I either wanted to win a gold medal in the Olympics for swimming or be the first woman president; I wanted to be the first female president until like high school. I always had some huge, huge, huge goal in mind. When I was working for companies, I realized that I had my own way of doing things. I can't keep complaining about the other way people do stuff, I got to just start it on my own company, take my own responsibilities and everything that comes with it, but with that I get to make my own rules.

YOU KNOW THE STIGMA OF BEING A FEMALE BOSS. DO YOU EVER FEEL LIKE YOU'RE BEING "BITCHY" WHILE YOU'RE WORKING?

To be honest, I've always been so focused on my career in a way that it's almost been blinding. In the beginning, I really didn't even know I was a bitch. Until some years into it, my friends and closer clients would make fun of how people are scared of me, then that's where I took notice. I went through phases where I'd be a little nicer, but at some point you just realize it's not about bitch, it's just about the work. If you take me as being a bitch, that's on you

YOU PARTNERED WITH A SLEW OF WOMEN ON PROJECTS. WHICH FEMALE ARTIST OR MODEL HAVE YOU SEEN WORK THE HARDEST?

The obvious answer is Jennifer Lopez. She was involved in every meeting we had, she was involved in every conversation, she was on set on time, very professional, and it was her first video she

had done in a while. Our call time was at 6 in the morning or something and her first take was one of the best takes of the day. That was a moment when I was like, This is where you see professionalism at its greatest. To be a woman in this industry and to attain some kind of notoriety, you can't just be lazy about it. Somehow some way, whether you work really hard or whether you're quote-unquote "bitchy" about it, I think that they're all really hardworking. Sometimes

YEAH, IT'S ALMOST LIKE MEDITATIVE TO ME. PEOPLE WAKE UP AND DO YOGA; I WAKE UP AND LOOK AT CLOTHES.

as a woman, unfortunately, people don't want to necessarily give you your credit. They don't understand: why is she there or how is she there? They're looking for some other type of reason other than that she works hard. You have to work so much harder so that they can't find another reason. You have to be that way as a female so that you really don't get questioned and you can just focus on your work.

DO YOU REMEMBER A TIME WHEN YOU WERE KIND OF LIKE, 'I DON'T HAVE TO PROVE MYSELF. MY WORK SPEAKS FOR ITSELF'?

In the beginning when I would find myself in meetings or calls, I would suggest things and people wouldn't pay it that much attention, then someone else would suggest it and they'd say that's a great idea. It was almost comedic at times. That part, I'm not going to lie, was a little frustrating for me.

AS A MOVING AND SHAKING BUSINESSWOMAN, WHAT'S YOUR STYLE ON A DAILY BASIS?

I used to be on set all day in heels. That's just a personal thing. I don't really think you need to wear it to prove anything; I love high fashion.

FAVORITE LABELS?

I like Gucci 'cause they're classic. I love Alexander McQueen because of they straddle the fence pretty well. I like Versace, but sometimes I think they push it a little too much for my taste. But for real, I have a pair of Aldo heels and every time I wear them people are like, 'Oh my God, where did you get those?' It really doesn't matter what color the bottom of your heel is. It depends on the heel itself, and the look and the color.

YOUR LIFESTYLE IS CONSTANTLY ON-THE-GO, SO HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE FOR YOU TO GET READY?

I don't spend that long getting ready, but I'll spend 30 minutes just looking through an outfit honestly. I never like to pick out an outfit the day before; I want to wake up in the morning and see how I feel that day. I just walk in my closet with my array of clothes, stare and just decide.

SO SUPER EFFORTLESS?


Yeah, it's almost like meditative to me. People wake up and do yoga; I wake up and look at clothes.



LEADER OF THE *New School*

SANTIGOLD ISN'T YOUR AVERAGE POP TART. THIS VIXEN KNOWS HOW TO PLAY THE FIELD. USING HER INTELLIGENCE AND KNOWLEDGE OF WORLDLY ISSUES, SHE WILL GO THE DISTANCE

BY TYLER K. MCDERMOTT



Santi White, better known as Santigold, makes a living off being radical. The 35-year-old singer's expressive lyrics cover everything from cultural genocide to social justice—a creative stance that's carried throughout her past releases, including this year's *Master of My Make-Believe* and its leading single, “Disparate Youth.” The ska-influenced ballad describes a scorned romance between two individuals from alternative universes.

Today, Santigold continues to wow audiences nationally, while also addressing America's current political climate and the controversy surrounding Voter ID laws. With a mic in hand and social media as her platform, this prep-school graduate has grown into a powerful advocate for the young nation. She is your leader.

VIXEN: IN YOUR MUSIC, YOU ADDRESS THE POLITICS OF THE MUSIC INDUSTRY. HOW DO YOU ESCAPE THE PRESSURE TO GO POP? SANTIGOLD:

I guess it comes down to having a solid idea of who you are as an artist, person, and having a clear idea of what you're in for. Why you're doing what you're doing. While it's very important for me to make a living doing what I do, there have to be elements of enjoyment and I have to feel proud of what I create. It comes down to artist integrity. I can't make something I don't believe in and I'm not proud of. So I make the music that I make and wherever it ends up, is what it is. But I'm not going to change what I make to fit mainstream pop music if I don't like them.

WAS THERE EVER A TIME YOU WANTED TO SURRENDER?

If they ask me to try something and everyone's like, “Just try it.” [Laughs] Then I'll try it and I hate it, then I can just be like, “Well, okay, I tried it. Let's move on.” Try to let people know you're not totally closed minded. I've tried things I knew wouldn't work, just to show them it wouldn't work. That's how far it can go. I'm always willing to try something, but at the end of the day if it's not good to me, I won't do it.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO KEEP PUSHING YOUR SOUND AND WHO YOU ARE?

The whole reason I make music in the first place is for the enjoyment. My creative aesthetic is always trying something that doesn't exist. For me, there's no

point in making music if you're going to try something that's already existed. So it's a search for a creative expression that's unique to me, and that hasn't been done already. My creative spirit is adventurous and pioneering—always try new territory, new approach or create something I haven't heard already. And that's always what drives my creative process. I'll always like reggae, new wave, punk/rock, and those elements will always be in my music, but the new technology and how a person evolves over time, you always find a new way to approach that.

SO SANTIGOLD WILL ALWAYS BE SANTIGOLD?

I mean, yeah, but if I get bored, I can always do something else. I can be Santigold without being Santigold. [Laughs] I don't think as an artist you have to be locked in a box, especially nowadays. There's always an opportunity to reinvent yourself. Very much of who I am, is being able to jump around and do different things. The wonderful thing about who Santigold is in that artist identity, is pretty much, anything goes. I can take any kind of music, put it in there and make it work, because Santigold is collage music.

THERE'VE BEEN CONTROVERSIAL ACTS LIKE MADONNA, M.I.A., ERYKAH BADU. DO YOU THINK MORE FEMALES FEMALE ARTISTS MIGHT STRAY FROM SOMETHING MORE “SAFE”?

When you have a smart woman who's really interesting when using art as a form a self-expression and is not a pop tart,



they're interested in saying something and making a statement. As any artist, it's about the message sometimes, and even when it's not literal in your lyrics, you can have the message in how you portray yourself. In the HBO show, *Girls* for example, Lena Dunham, her message, by just appearing on the show how she is, the casting in general, challenges notions of beauty and what's real. She refuses to put on hot outfits and make up as the star of this TV show. So that statement is the same as music. As true artists, we want to use our art as something, and we want to make statements that challenge people's notions of what's accepted truth. Good art will always make people challenge their beliefs. The women in music that are real artists strive to do that with their art and that's what separates them from pop stars, whose goals are to stay with the trends and make money. I think it's a different agenda on the part of the person. Do you want to be an artist who stirs things up and makes people think differently or do you want to ride the wave and reap the benefits?

I'VE NOTICED ON YOUR TWITTER FEED, YOU'VE BEEN RETWEETING POSTS ABOUT THE VOTER ID LAWS. WHAT'S YOUR STANCE ON THE SITUATION? I just think it's really dangerous what they're doing. And I think it's clear they're trying to alienate voters, especially young voters or lower-class voters who may not have a driver's license or anything like that. We've seen over the past couple elections, where it just keeps—first they try to discount certain votes or they cancel with the votes and we see it becoming more blatant with legislation where they're trying to prevent people from coming out to vote. I just think that's dangerous for democracy overall. We're riding some dangerous lines in maintaining true democracy in this country. There are other ways, but this is the most blatant in our face ways I've seen so far and people don't even know about them. It's these rules that create more and more red tape that discourage young voters. People need to make sure they know the laws in their area and take the step that they need to vote.

**“WE’RE THE
KEEPERS IN
AMERICA.
OUR HOUSE
IS BURNING
DOWN.”**



WHAT ABOUT CELEBRITIES LIKE LUPE FIASCO, WHO RECENTLY REVEALED HE DOESN'T PLAN ON VOTING DO STATEMENTS LIKE THAT INFLUENCE YOUNG VOTERS? That's horrible. That's exactly what I was talking about. I get it. It's like back in the day when people would vote for the independent party. I get that people are trying to address issue that they don't think are right. There are definitely things I don't support about the campaigning but at the same time, it's like you're not achieving anything by not voting. You're just letting people who vote make the decision for you. And on a close election like this, you can't really just let people who are voting against all your beliefs win. If you are a person who really cares—I know Lupe is a person that really cares, but I think it's important to vote and express your opinion because if you don't vote, you lose. There are certain things I don't agree with, but am I going to say, “I don't agree with this, therefore I'm not voting”? No because it doesn't really help anything.

SO WITH THAT IN MIND AS WELL AS THE PRESSURE THAT PLACED ON YOUNG VOTERS, IN YOUR OPINION, WHY SHOULD THEY VOTE? Young people have a really unique perspective and there's a big generation gap between some of the people in America. And I think young people have a very important voice that needs to be heard. I think it's important that they use it and they're becoming an important society factor in who's running their country. What I've been speaking on in a lot the records on my album is we're in a really delicate place and it's a lot of things that are running ragged all over the place. I think that we don't speak up as the keepers. That's what the lyric says. “We're the keepers in America. Our house is burning down.” If we don't take personal responsibility, we'll all lose, because the world is falling apart. We see this right in front of our eyes day by day. Voting's not going to change everything and I don't think every candidate is perfect, but I think it's irresponsible to not take part in helping shape the world the way you believe it should be.



"I'M A REPUBLICAN VOTING FOR MITT ROMNEY/YOU LAZY B*TCHES IS F*CKIN' UP THE ECONOMY"

THE MESSAGE:

Where Are Rap's Political First Ladies?

THE RATIO OF BOYS TO GIRLS IN THE LANDSCAPE OF RAP IS STILL OUT-NUMBERED BUT FACTOR IN POLITICS AND THE RESULTS ARE DEVASTATING. IS CONSCIOUS HIP-HOP RESERVED FOR MEN ONLY?

BY ADELLE PLATON

Nicki Minaj's appearance on Lil Wayne's *Dedication 4* mixtape stole the show. With the election in season, the raptress dropped an unexpected endorsement. "I'm a Republican voting for Mitt Romney/You lazy b*tches is f*ckin' up the economy," she spits.

While listeners would be more willing to bet that Minaj co-signed the right wing as a lyrical stunt, her 10-second political view sent waves through the mainstream media, eventually travelling to the ears of the United States' current President and Romney's opponent, Barack Obama. On a morning radio show with Orlando's Obie and Lil Shawn, Obama did not take the Democratic shot to heart. "She likes to play different characters, so I don't know what's going on there," he quipped.

When it comes to politically conscious rap, many female MCs have taken a back seat. Google the term "female political rappers" and a thorough search only produces Queen Latifah and her single "U.N.I.T.Y." off the 1993 album *Black Reign*. Not to say that women in the music industry haven't Rosa Park-ed hip-hop. Soul singer Erykah Badu dropped a two-part compilation in 2009 titled *New Amerykah*—the sociopolitical Part One: 4th World War played the more romantic counterpart to Part Two: *Return of the Ankh*. The latter half produced the controversial video for "Window Seat" in which the Grammy Award-winning songstress strips down on the streets of her native Dallas, ending with two words: "group think." Though it was perceived as conscious music, Badu dismissed any official affiliations. In her 2010 cover story with *VIBE*, she said, "I am not a feminist. I am not a Black liberal-ist, Republican, Democrat. I am not anything. I'm human. I support things that have good intent and that I feel I vibrate with, that I resonate with."

When it comes to taking a political stance on wax, the men are more prone to megaphoning their positions. Queensbridge rapper Nas took a more combative approach to Obama's presidency with the 2008 "Black President" that also samples Tupac's "I Wonder If Heaven Got A Ghetto." God's Son copes with the repercussions of instituting an African American in the White House. "We in need of a break, I'm thinkin' I can trust this brother/ But will he keep it way real?/ Every innocent nigga in jail, gets out on appeal/ When he wins, will he really care still?" While that last question is up for debate, that same "brother" now faces a tough crowd in the 2012 election, a crowd that was fed up with the negative repercussions of a war-loving commander in chief that left the economy and job market in struggle. Young Jeezy took a more light-hearted

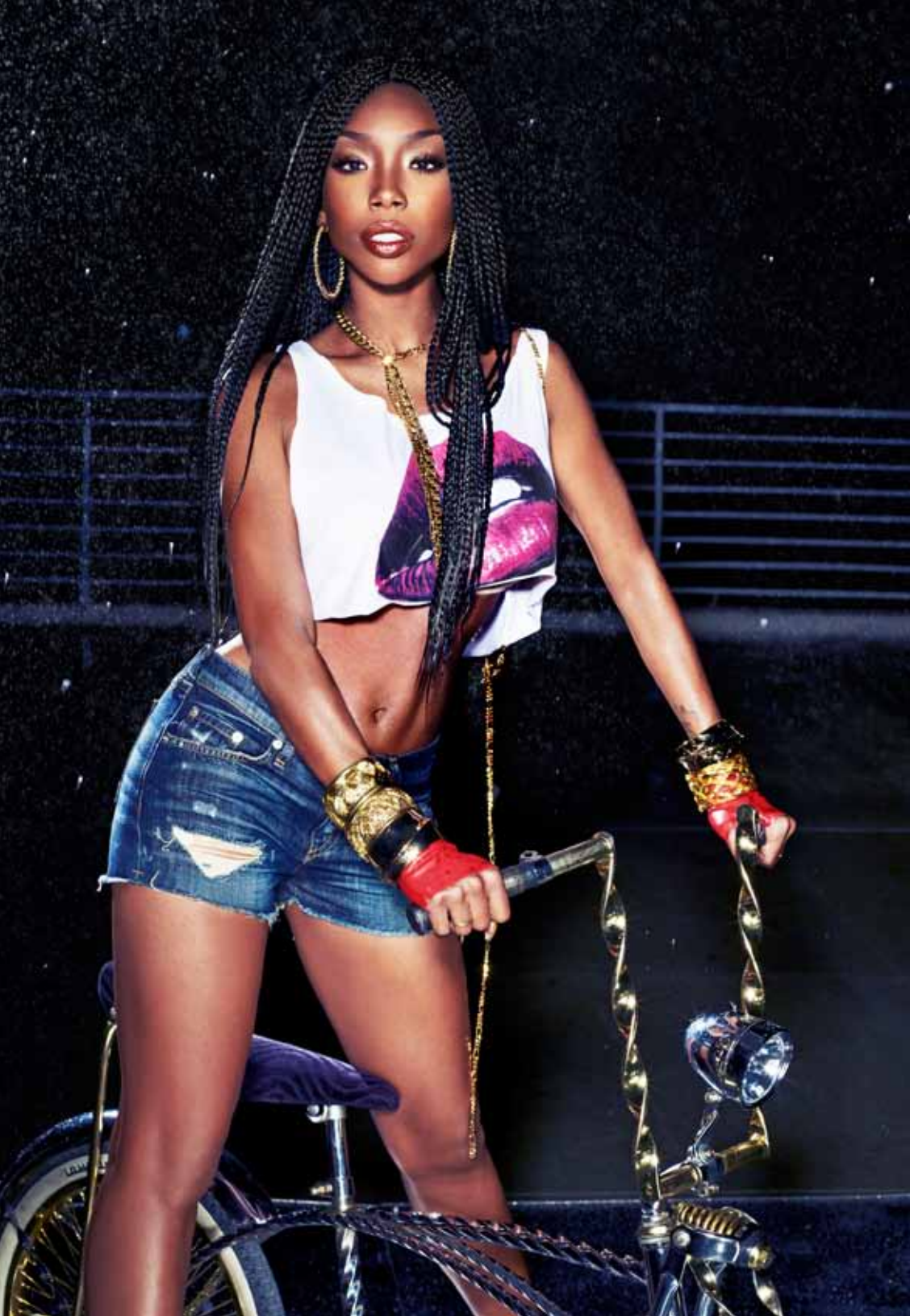
approach with the economic meltdown-inspired LP *The Recession* in 2008, which featured the pro-Bama cuts "Crazy World" and "My President."

Even off records, male hip-hoppers will take a political stand. By Obama's definition, Chicago native Lupe Fiasco has been seen as a "character" in the public eye, especially after calling the current Head of State a "terrorist." In a 2011 interview with CBS' "What's Trending with Shira Laza," Lupe said that he didn't vote because it would mean taking "responsibility for everything he does 'cause that's just who I am as a human being. I don't want you to bomb some village in the middle of nowhere." In September 2012, the Food & Liquor rapper recently came out tweets blazing after actor D.L. Hughley reprimanded him for encouraging followers not to vote: "it's a little 2 late thinking voting gonna save people from THEMSELVES," Fiasco tweeted. "most of the bills are written by corporations... its more lobbyists in Washington DC than it is politicians. 50,000 at my last count..so who are we really voting for?" Compton wordsmith Kendrick Lamar also took a disinterest in ballots. In an interview with *Alternative News*, he said, "I don't do no voting. I will keep it straight up real with you. I don't believe in none of the sh*t that's going on in the world."

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— ERYKAH BADU

When it comes to political takes in rap, there is no female voicebox present. While Latifah's *Black Reign* and Lauryn Hill's lyrical contributions to *The Fugees'* 1996 *The Score* were products of social consciousness, the times have changed, especially with an African American seated in the oval office. Nicki Minaj may have taken a faux Republican stance to stunt rap but it dragged out a pink elephant in the room: there are no visible female rappers in the mainstream vocalizing their thoughts on current events. It may be because the formula to gain respect as a lady spitter is by following the boys' blueprint. As more female rappers emerge, the necessity for a woman to voice her opinion on political issues increases. The entertainment industry is in need of non-male voices who can teach today's generation of women something beyond slapping singles on strippers and copping high-end designer pieces. Badu said it best: "When you do something responsible, you always have the understanding that people are going to be encouraged by it, and learn from it."



BRANDY *New*

BOUNCING BACK INTO THE FRAY, **BRANDY** DISCOVERS REJUVENATED CONFIDENCE, YOUTHFUL ROMANCE AND PURPOSE

NIKI MCGLOSTER

It's been a decade since veteran songbird Brandy has belted a top-tier single. Currently sitting atop the better half of the R&B/Hip Hop stack, Chris Brown-assisted, whispery cut "Put It Down" has allowed the femme vocalist to revive old fans' standom and wrangle in a new, younger generation.

"It's amazing that people still have a love for me and still feel like they can relate to me," the 33-year-old siren admits on a recent Sunday. "It really does keep me on my toes, just being a role model for young girls, but I am grown. I gotta sing for the grown people sometimes." Life, though, hasn't always been sweet for the chocolate-colored chanteuse.

Over the past six years, Brandy has faced an uphill battle against devastating legal woes and dwindling music sales. "I thought it was over. I didn't really have a deal and it seemed like no one was interested in giving me another chance. People were calling me a has-been and it felt like it was over for me." Only recently has the award-winning

singer found renewed strength to comeback—she cites her affectionately named Stars for that power.

Today, youthfully fresh and ever the powerful siren, B-Rocka's return rebuilds the gaping hole in female rhythm and blues. Somewhere between the vocal power of Whitney Houston and the international reach of today's Pop&B stars, Brandy has etched her signature sound, sitting comfortably next to a diverse class. "I know there are a lot of artists out there that are true to this genre, and I wanted to contribute to that too."

Unsaturated R&B is a sometimes forgotten acquired taste, yet B-Rocka is equipped with a fully loaded record and the old hand know-how to make us fall in love again.

HOW DOES IT FEEL THIS TIME AROUND? WHAT MAKES THIS RETURN TO MUSIC DIFFERENT FROM TIMES BEFORE? I had a little bit more guidance that I trusted with this album. It just felt like the beginning of my career; how I felt with Atlantic Records. Having my first A&R on board (Breyon Prescott), I just really trusted them and what my album should be—helping bring back the genre of R&B music.

WHAT WAS THE REALIZATION THAT YOU WERE READY TO MAKE A STRICT R&B ALBUM? That's what my fans wanted from me. I felt like that was my way to reintroduce myself to them and introduce myself to people that don't even know me. They're supporting me and it feels good. I took my daughter to the Mindless Behavior concert and 10- to 16-year-olds are screaming to the top of their lungs when I'm walking in. I started doing music before they were born! I just remember asking some little girl, 'How do you know me?'

EARLY ON IN YOUR CAREER DID YOU THINK YOU'D BE AT THIS AGE AND STILL REACHING YOUNG GIRLS THROUGH YOUR MUSIC? I didn't see it, but I definitely wanted longevity. I can't believe sometimes that I'm still standing after everything I've been through, but I'm here. With the success of "Put It Down" and moving forward with "Wildest Dreams," it feels like a brand new time but it also feels familiar to me.

THE ENERGY IS YOUTHFUL BUT THERE'S MATURITY AND GROWTH ON THIS ALBUM. It's definitely different than any album I've done, but you can tell it's still me.

"WILDEST DREAMS" IS DEFINITELY A RECORD TRUE TO THE BRANDY WE KNOW. It's about me not believing I could find someone who cares about me, because at one time, I gave up on love. I just was like, I guess I'm going to be alone. I'm just going to take care of my daughter and do my thing.

WOW. HOW DID YOU GET TO THAT PLACE? I couldn't get it right. I got really close to being married and it didn't happen. After that, I dated a little bit and it was always something that just wasn't connecting with love and me. I think it

was because I was looking for love to do something for me; to make me happy, fill a void, make me feel complete, and all of these things don't come from another, it comes from a love of self. I didn't understand that at the time. I really had to confront all of that. I said a prayer and I waited and I saw Ryan.

IT'S WIDELY KNOWN THAT TWO ELEVEN MEANS A LOT TO YOU. IT'S YOUR BIRTH DATE BUT ALSO THE DATE OF WHITNEY HOUSTON'S PASSING. WHAT RUNS THROUGH YOUR MIND WHEN YOU RECALL THAT DAY? February 11 will never be the same. I think about her everyday but that day in particular, it's different. I didn't understand. I had

just seen her the day before; I just spoke to her a couple days before she passed. It just didn't seem right the way she passed. I was angry, I was confused, but as I started to process it all, I just started to feel like there was a responsibility that she passed on to me to stay true to [the music]. She gave me the dream and possibility, and I have to do that same thing for other people. This music thing is not just about me anymore. It's about the people that I'm relating to. People need music.

DO YOU THINK THAT YOU'LL DO A SONG FOR WHITNEY? I don't think I'm ready for that yet. It's really about the overall purpose, which is music. I remember her telling me, 'Nobody can be you so don't try to be something other than you. Be yourself and stay true to that.' That was the last thing she said to me.

That was the last time I heard her voice. It's all a spiritual thing to me. The day, the passing, it's all...

IT'S STILL AFFECTING YOU; IT'S IN YOUR VOICE. I never want Whitney's passing to be about me. She meant so much to me, so I have to take something from it to help me move on and give me a purpose after she's gone.

NOT ONLY HAVE YOU STEPPED BACK IN THE MUSIC REALM, YOU'VE BEEN EXERCISING YOUR ACTING CHOPS AS OF LATE. HOW WAS THE TRANSITION BACK? It was scary and natural. When I impressed my acting coach [Tasha Smith], I felt like I could go forward. She really helped me rediscover that

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confidence in my acting. I was blessed with Drop Dead Diva then Chardonnay for *The Game*. I really had to get in there and do my thing if I was going to fit in with them. I just trusted my instincts, the same way I did with *Moesha*. To be able to trust that again was great, and I'm happy I get a chance to possibly go back to *The Game* full-time.

ARE YOU EXCITED TO WORK WITH LAUREN LONDON? Yes! I'm obsessed with Lauren London because she's so damn cute. I'm excited to work with her and to see her new character, but I'm going to miss Tia [Mowry]. She was such the anchor and backbone of that show.

INTERESTED IN BEING THE LEAD ON ANOTHER TV SITCOM? That's the goal, to

definitely do another television show of my own. There are some ideas that I've had for a long time. You never know what happens, but I would definitely be open to doing another television show, full-time.

WITH THE POLITICAL SEASON IN FULL SWING, WHAT YOU WOULD TELL YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE ON VOTING? So many have gone through so much, especially African Americans, to get the opportunity to vote. I remember my first time voting. My mom took me and held my hand. It gives you a voice on what you want and what you need. I think it's so important for us to get out there and vote. That's all I can really say about it.



STANDING O:

Why Michelle Obama needs four more years

PRESIDENT OBAMA BROUGHT COLOR TO THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM UPON HIS ARRIVAL IN THE OVAL OFFICE, BUT HIS WIFE DIDN'T BASK IN THE SHADE. HERE'S WHY OUR FIRST LADY NEEDS A SECOND TERM

BY ADELLE PLATON

Her chic ensembles turned fashionistas into political Stans. Her musical co-signs become viral hits (see: Elle Varner) and her pen pal? Oh, just some woman named Beyoncé. Michelle Obama serves as the prototype for presidential spouses, doing more than just stand, smile and wave.

For one, during her husband's presidency, she's taken more of a hands-on approach to exterior design than prior First Ladies. As a mother of two—Malia and Sasha—Mrs. Obama applied her nurturing traits to the White House's shrubbery. In her May 2012 book, *American Grown: The Story of the White House Kitchen Garden and Gardens Across America*, Obama recalls the garden initiative she started in 2009 that had her planting fruits and veggies on the White House lawn, the first since Eleanor Roosevelt's Victory Garden. Michelle admits she didn't have a green thumb but it was what the garden represented that got her dirt-digging. "I wanted it to be the starting point for something bigger. "As both a mother and a first lady, I was alarmed by reports of skyrocketing childhood obesity rates and the dire consequences for our children's health," she writes. "And I hoped this garden would help begin a conversation about this issue—a conversation about the food we eat, the lives we lead, and how all of that affects our children."

Subsequently, the toned and towering (she stands at 5'11") go-getter launched an anti-obesity campaign called "Let's Move!" Tagteaming with Dr. Jill Biden, the wife of Vice President Joe Biden, Mo aimed to decrease the rate of obesity in 8- to 18-year-olds by encouraging them to take on more active lifestyles. Even Bey got in on the movement by remixing her hit "Get Me Bodied" into a youth-friendly version titled "Move Your Body" to rouse a middle-school flash mob to help Obama's cause.

When Mrs. Obama swapped dancing for public speaking, the whole world listened. At the September 2012 Democratic National Convention, the President's right-hand woman instilled the values and spirit of her husband's campaign. As she stood at the podium overlooking thousands of political partygoers and many more watching from the small screen at home, Obama, dressed in a silky pink Tracy Reese number (due in the designer's Manhattan store and official site this December), recalled watching her father report to work. Despite having multiple sclerosis, the city pump operator never missed a day so that he could send her and her brother to college. "[Barack and I] learned about dignity and decency—that how hard you work matters more than how much you make. That helping others means more than just getting ahead yourself," she said during her DNC speech. "That you don't take shortcuts or play by your own set of rules. And success doesn't count unless you earn it fair and square."

Now, as her husband fights tooth and nail to prove that the ballots of yesteryear weren't a mistake, Michelle continues to forge her own movement. Mrs. Obama could have easily glided through these past four years as the President's +1 but she tackled some of the nation's biggest dilemmas alongside Barack instead. Her personal struggles of trying to make ends meet for her children encouraged Barack to make the repayment of college loans more middle-class friendly and sign the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009 so that women in the workforce can earn equal pay. Even if her public appearances doubled as fashion shows, it was her self-made endeavors that took center-stage. At a time when soda bans and restaurants posting calorie counts were still being debated, she created the "Let's Move!" campaign to ensure that the youth did not recline to the sedentary life. Michelle deserves a second round to push such initiatives forward and institute others that matter to the common folk. The Harvard grad and self-proclaimed "Mom-in-chief" has our vote because in her, we have found one of us.

ROCKING THE VOTE BEING POLITICALLY CORRECT IN THE STYLE DEPARTMENT NO LONGER REQUIRES A POWER SUIT. CHECK OUT MICHELLE OBAMA'S FINEST FASHION MOMENTS BY ADELLE PLATON

1. BALLIN!

The Obamas' first dance at the Inauguration Ball couldn't light a candle to the haute off-the-shoulder Jason Wu chiffon gown Michelle twirled in. Though Beyoncé serenaded the power couple with her own rendition of Etta James' "At Last," all eyes were on Mrs. O.

2. LOVIN' THE CREW

Since Michelle's soft yellow dress suit at the 2008 inauguration ceremony designed by Isabel Toledo and J. Crew, the latter has gotten so much play from the First Lady's closet that she's rarely ever seen without a piece from the upscale brand.

3. KORS LIGHT

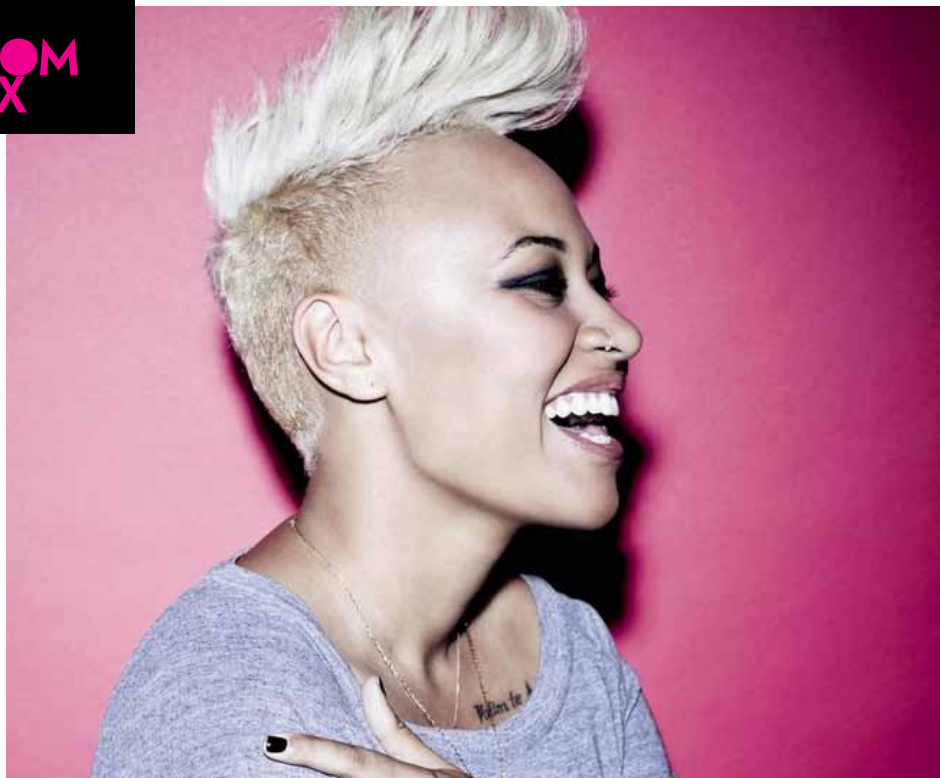
When Mrs. O rocked a black georgette pleated Michael Kors dress not once but twice at a White House ceremony and Congressional Black Caucus Foundation 42nd Annual Legislative Conference, not only did we feel better about recycling threads but we learned that remixing classic pieces can be just as trendy.

4. LADY IN RED

At the state dinner for China's President Hu Jintao, Michelle donned a silk red and black down designed by Sarah Burton of the London house Alexander McQueen, complementing her fiery personality.

5. RUN DNC

In addition to her inspiring speech and chic nail color ("The Queen's Might" by L'Oreal), Michelle Obama's Tracy Reese-designed pink silk dress was a hit with convention attendees and witnesses.



Off The Cuff

WHILE MED SCHOOL ISN'T A PREREQUISITE FOR THE MUSIC INDUSTRY, SCOTTISH SONG-
STRESS **EMELI SANDÉ** IS TAKING HER TWIST OF FATE AND RUNNING WITH IT.

BY ADELLE PLATON

▶▶▶ Emeli Sandé is Scotland Yard's best kept secret. Though her unconventional looks (her static-standing blonde coif and red puckers) evoke mod-clesque beauty, the half-Scottish/half-Zambian singer's slow-cooking hype has earned her golden praise from her performances during the Opening and Closing Ceremonies at the 2012 London Olympics. The genre-bending songbird commands attention with her shivery vibratos and lyrical poise, blending pop, electronic and soul into cohesive genius—a testament to her four year-experience in the music business.

The former clinical neuroscience major was ushered into the biz after bumping into producer Naughty Boy, which resulted in a by-line on UK

rapper Chipmunk's "Diamond Rings" and a publishing deal. Sandé's mean pen game had her scribing for such stars abroad including Susan Boyle, Leona Lewis and Tinie Tempah. The 2011 Brits' Critics Choice Awards winner has much to celebrate, especially after recently low-key marrying her man of seven years and announcing her own children's songwriting workshop. With praise from her late-night looks on the Tonight Show with Jay Leno, the Virgin/EMI Records signee is slowly injecting her vocal vibrancy into America's mainstream. With an emotionally versatile catalog on her June 2012 debut *Our Version Of Events*, which includes the hopeful heartache-soother "Maybe" and open letter ballad "Heaven," Sandé is bound to blow.