





SABRINA CARPENTER

Words and Photos by **CATHERINE POWELL**

Styled by **CHRIS HORAN**

Jeans by **DKNY**

Shirt by **RACHEL ZOE**

Shoes by **VINCE CAMUTO**

IT'S 7:45 A.M., AND I AM CRANKY. There's an unusual chill in the air for June and the walk from Times Square to 48th Street and Sixth Avenue is basically an obstacle course with the key objective being avoiding lost, European tourists. I'm on four hours of sleep and much to my dismay, there is no coffee available at *Fox & Friends'* outdoor concert. I slump, ready to fall asleep standing up when Sabrina Carpenter skips on stage and begins singing. Instantly, my mood shifts as the perky, 15-year-old blonde belts through "The Middle of Starting Over," a song from her debut EP, *Can't Blame a Girl For Trying*. I had heard the song before, but watching her perform it live while commanding the stage like a pro leaves me utterly speechless. The Hollywood Records-signed artist is not just another Disney Channel star with a voice. In fact, during her six-song set I completely forget the main reason Sabrina is in New York City is to promote her new sitcom, *Girl Meets World*. She's just that good.



Sabrina's story begins in Pennsylvania, and at age 2 she began singing — not long after she learned to talk. She began dance lessons at 3, followed by singing lessons at 6. At 9 she entered “The Next Miley Cyrus Project” singing contest along with 10,000 other kids and placed third. Over the year long contest, she made tons of music videos and started to build a fan base on YouTube. The contest helped her find her current vocal coach and forced her to come out of her shell as a performer. About a year after the contest she decided to dip her toes into the acting world and secured a manager who helped her book auditions in New York. She went out for her first pilot season and booked a Disney XD show that didn't get picked up. The following year, she scored three pilots — one being *Girl Meets World*. “Thank goodness the other two didn't get picked up because then I wouldn't have been able to do *Girl Meets World*,” Sabrina says.

Just hours after Sabrina's performance on *Fox & Friends*, *Girl Meets World* premiered to an impressive 5.16 million viewers. The family sitcom, a spin-off of the '90s favorite *Boy Meets World*, has been highly anticipated even before the pilot was filmed. Over the past year the excitement has continued to build, and Sabrina calls that “a whole lot of luck.” *Boy Meets World* went off air 14 years ago and signed off with an emotional finale in which the four main characters — Cory Matthews (Ben Savage), Topanga Lawrence (Danielle Fishel), Shawn Hunter (Rider Strong) and Eric Matthews (Will Friedle) — leave their hometown of Philadelphia for New York City. *Girl Meets World* follows the life of Cory and Topanga's daughter, Riley Matthews (Rowan Blanchard) and her best friend Maya Hart (Sabrina) as they take on John Quincy Adams Middle School and New York City. “It's a show for a new generation,” Sabrina says. “It's cool because parents can watch it with

their kids and feel nostalgic.”

Sabrina’s character is a bit of a troublemaker, but you quickly learn she has quite a few problems at home that influence her behavior. It’s easy to compare Maya to Shawn Hunter, Cory’s troubled, childhood friend, but Sabrina is confident that Maya’s back-story and family life provide a context for her unique character. “They both have a strong guard up, but I think it’s always different with girls,” she says. “[Boys and girls] react to situations differently.” The first season highlights friendship, and Sabrina believes that Riley and Maya are the best friends either girl could have.

Because *Boy Meets World* is such an iconic show and has never gone off the air since its cancellation in 2000, the lead-up to *Girl Meets World* has been filled with skepticism and doubt from fans that don’t want their favorite characters tampered with. But based on reactions from live tapings and fan interactions, Sabrina feels they’re doing the original series justice. “We’re making this for the kids who didn’t have a show like *Boy Meets World*,” she says. “There’s really no other show on TV right now that kids and parents can watch together.” However, old fans should look out for various *Boy Meets World* Easter eggs throughout *Girl Meets World*’s first season, such as a banner in the back of Cory’s classroom that reads “Dream. Try. Do Good.” — the last bit of advice Mr. Feeny gave his students on *Boy Meets World*.

While many of the lessons taught through *Boy Meets World* are timeless, it is a completely different world now. “Things have changed so much since *Boy Meets World* went off the air. They didn’t have social media,” Sabrina explains. She feels like in a way that makes it harder for her and her young cast mates because every day they are being flooded with Twitter and Facebook messages from *Boy Meets World* fans telling them



not to screw this up. “It adds some pressure,” she says, “Ben and Danielle didn’t even know their show was popular when it was on. They only had the ratings.” And while she is in the spotlight, with the help of Ben and Danielle, Sabrina has learned that not everything in her life needs to be public. “More than anything [Ben and Danielle] have taught us to be humble, and that no matter what happens to not change who we are,” she says. “If they can do a show this popular and still be grounded, we can, too.”

The biggest concern from *Boy Meets World* fans stems from the fact that *Girl Meets World* is a Disney Channel show, which puts some limitations on what topics they can tackle. But Sabrina feels that a lot of the tougher storylines stem from Maya. “To my knowledge, there has never been a character on a Disney show with an absentee mom and a dad who has another family, because that’s not a typical, perfect life. But that’s what life is. It’s not perfect,” she shares. “I’m lucky that I get to play that character because I know that sadly, some people will be able to relate to that.” The youngest character on the show is five, and the parents are in their 30s, and Sabrina says there are storylines for those age groups and everything in between.

Though Sabrina is obviously musically talented, Maya will not be busting out into song *High School Musical*-style. Sabrina is keeping her talents separate. “I wouldn’t want people to compare my songs to Maya’s songs, because Maya is a different character than Sabrina,” she says. In between “The Next Miley Cyrus Project” and *Girl Meets World*, Sabrina signed her deal with Hollywood Records at the young age of 12. The recording process for her debut record — out this fall — began around the same time *Girl Meets World* was picked up. A year later the record is almost complete.

As a teaser, Sabrina released the *Can’t Blame a Girl For Trying* EP in April, and the response so far has been overwhelming. Disney Channel has her music video for “Can’t Blame a Girl For Trying” on heavy rotation, and Sabrina says prior to *Girl Meets World* premiering, people were coming up to her in public because of the song. “I’m so glad that girls have found it relatable, because it’s hard to pick a first single,” she says. “And now [with the album] I’ll be able to take more risks.”

A “big bulk” of Sabrina’s upcoming full-length was penned by Sabrina with some help from co-writers. She draws inspiration from her own experiences as well as things her friends have gone through. “I wrote a song about Rowan, obviously a friendship song,” she says, smiling, “It’s cliché to say love songs, but I wrote some of those. Just things that teenagers can relate to.” In terms of sound, the EP can be compared to Colbie Callait or Sara Bareilles, but Sabrina says the album is like that mixed with Christina Aguilera and Adele. They’re bold influences, and very unlike the typical Disney-endorsed singer. “I didn’t force myself to be different, I’ve just never wanted to make a dance song,” Sabrina says. “I just want to make music that represents who I am, and I think that is exactly what the EP is.”

After a year or so in the spotlight from *Girl Meets World*, Sabrina has really been able to show the world exactly who she is. With over 313,000 followers across all her social media platforms, it certainly hasn’t been a quiet 12 months, and ultimately the attention has pushed Sabrina to create music and a character that people can relate to. “I’ve wanted to be on a Disney Channel show since I was a kid, and now I’ve done that. And I’ve wanted to make an album since I was 2, and I’m doing that,” Sabrina says. “I’m finding myself, and I think that’s really cool.” AKO



