



Jacket: The Kooples | Top: Pinko | Skirt: Pinko

# ZELLA DAY

Having written ever since she was a child, the Arizona-born and (now) LA-based singer-songwriter Zella Day is taking the music world by storm with her mesmerising folk-pop power ballads. Her track *‘Hypnotic’* hit over 3 million views on YouTube, she’s created a song for *‘Insurgent’*, the second film of the *‘Divergent’* trilogy, and now she’s touring all over Europe. We caught up with the singer on The White Stripes, how easy it is for her to be completely vulnerable on stage and the keys to survival as a female artist in a post-Lana Del Rey age.

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Photographed at the South Place Hotel  
southplacehotel.com

**While growing up in a small town in Arizona, what were your main influences that moulded you into the artist that you are today?**

It all goes back to when I was eight. My parents were into really good music, so I was around a lot of Lauren Hill, Fiona Apple, Fleetwood Mac and The Beatles. My dad was a punk rocker, so I listened to a lot of The Damned and Bad Religion. The first songs I learned to play on the guitar were Bob Dylan and The White Stripes.

**You’ve only just released your latest album this summer. Do you feel that those early influences translated into your new music?**

To be honest, when I was growing up, I didn’t play music to emulate anybody else. I had inspirations, but none were so powerful in my life that I decided that I wanted to play music because of them. I didn’t model myself after anyone, it was very much that I was in the environment of music and I think it runs in my blood. My mum’s a singer, my aunt is an opera singer, so there’s music running throughout the family. But as far as influences translating into my music, I don’t hear The White Stripes in my songs really. And that was like a big one for me, growing up.

**It’s quite a personal album as well, each song telling a different story. Do you find it difficult being so emotionally open on stage and on record?**

Not really. The good thing about music is that once we hear a song, we translate it in a way that we need for it to be translated, so that it fits in our entire life and helps us in some way. I know that with the music that I write, there are some people that hear it entirely different or have a meaning that maybe I didn’t have. What’s important is the emotion behind it and people can feel that. I mean yeah, I’m telling my secrets, but at the same time, everyone has their own secrets. It’s almost like the music is not yours anymore, it’s everyone’s.





(Opposite) Dress: Finery | Jacket: Malene Birger | Boot: Free People  
Dress: Free People | Coat: BLK DNM | Boot: Ted & Muffy







(Opposite) Cape: The Kooples | Dress: The Kooples | Bangle: Malene Birger  
Dress: Caterina Gatta | Boots: Ted & Muffy



**As I said earlier, each song off the album holds a different narrative. Is there one in particular that has a special meaning to you, personally?**

*‘Jerome’* on the record is really special to me. That narrative is really visceral. I was born in Phoenix, Arizona but my parents got married in Jerome, Arizona. It’s a small mining town outside of the desert, it’s built into the side of the mountain. It’s really small; it’s actually one of the most haunted places in America. So all the ghostbusters have flocked to Jerome. It’s really cool; it’s an interesting place. So, my parents walked into a museum that was all dedicated to Jerome and the history of Jerome. They were looking through a yearbook and the coalminer’s wife in 1842 was named Zella. So that’s where my name comes from and I always wanted to write a song about the ghost of Zella. Jerome is sort of for the original Zella.

***‘Hypnotic’* is one of your most popular songs at the moment; it reached over 3 million plays on YouTube. How did it come to life?**

That song was fun, it was kind of like a happy accident. We were in the studio and my producers and me started playing around with that hook. It was kind of a joke at first and then, all of a sudden, I started writing these chords on the acoustic guitar and then I just started writing lyrics to this progression that I had on the acoustic guitar. It all sort of fell out. That song was written in a day. It was supposed to be born, I believe that about songs. They exist beyond any of us.

**What about the visuals for it? Did you have any creative input over them?**

It’s a dark video for a dark song. There were two very long, exhausting days, but I did it to myself. I wrote the treatment with my director. That’s something that I’m starting to learn as well, so I’m trying to get familiar with it. Video, film and photography, graphic art, all of those things. You can’t just be a musician, you need to have the other elements and variables, so making the videos has been a fun thing for me to learn and be a part of.

**In a post-Lana Del Rey age, how do you react to the counterproductive attitude that people have towards artists when trying to put them in a box while missing the point?**

I mean for me, in these early stages of my career as a new artist, I think it’s probably expected. Because it’s comfortable for people. I haven’t really proven myself as an artist yet. Although, in my perspective, I’ve been playing music since I was nine and I’ve been writing for a long time. I released a record when I was thirteen. I’m very much my own artist and I know that I have my own sound, but you can’t just go up to people like ‘Here I am!’ because there’s so much noise and there are so many musicians. It takes time, it takes time to build a foundation and I’m not worried about the labelling because, at the end of the day, if you come to my show or listen to my record, it doesn’t sound like anything else. I think I’d be a lot more afraid of being labelled if I was trying to chase a trend or a specific sound, which I am evidently not. I’m trying to do something that’s timeless and that takes a minute.

**What’s your FAULT?**

My mum says that I’m the most confident insecure person she’s ever met.



(opposite) Dress: Finery | Jacket: Malene Birger | Boot: Free People  
Culottes: Malene Birger | Top: Amanda Wakeley | Bangle: Malene Birger

