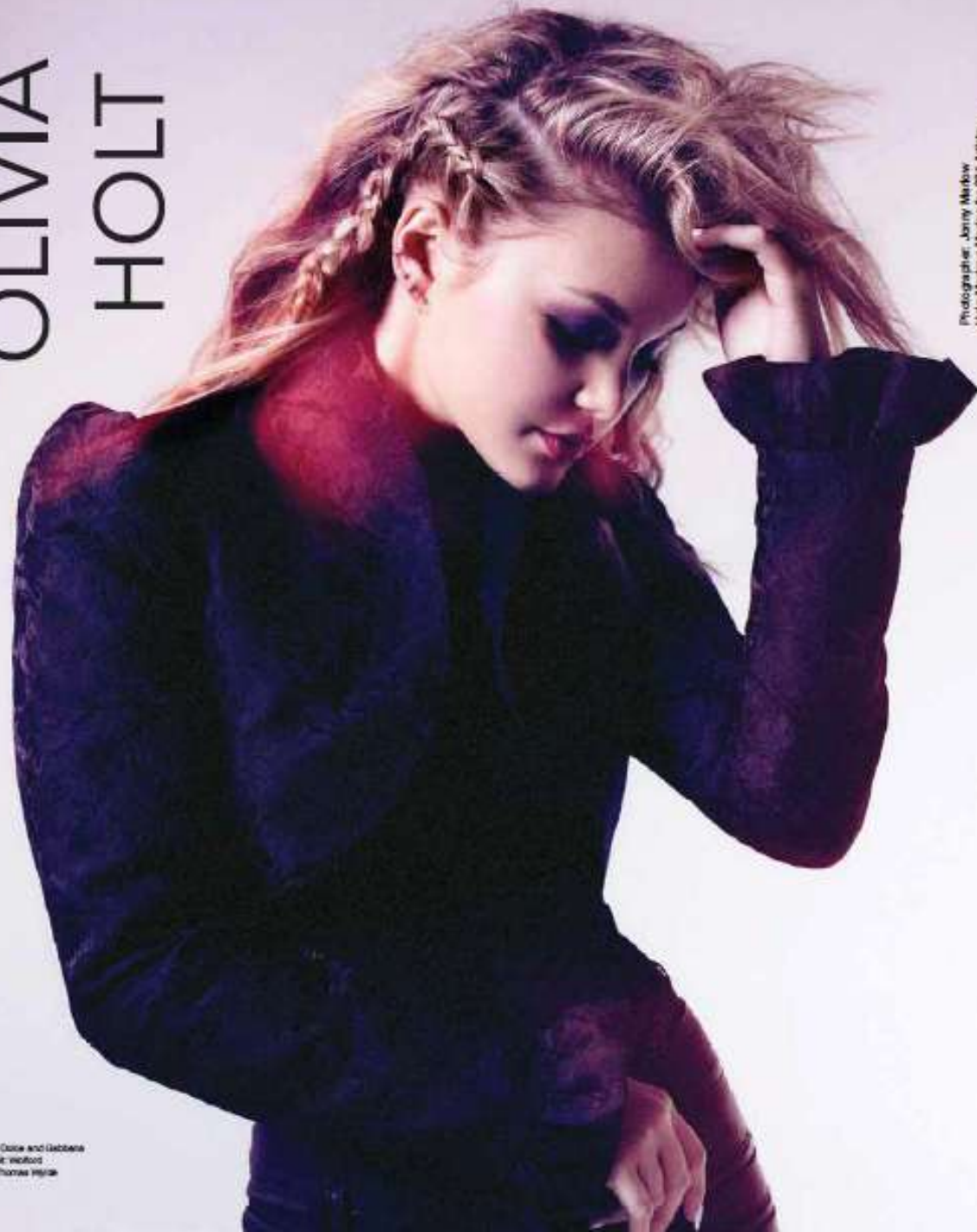


OLIVIA HOLT



Photographer: Jerry Markow
Hair: Melissa Marino for 901 Artists
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Stylist: Courtney for LALALOVE
Lighting Tech: Alex Feliyaeva
Writer: Rachael Roth

With chart-topping summer jams and increasingly challenging acting roles, the former *Kickin' It* star's career has been kicked into high gear.

Olivia Holt's music may be all you need for your 2017 summer playlist, from the sun-bleached pop track "Paradise," a collaboration with Denmark-based rapper Brandon Beal, to the relentless beat of MYTHAD's "Party on a Weekday," which features her flowier crooning to her hit single: the Calypso (tinged "History"), and the unabashedly feel-good as these "Phoenix"—seriously, try not to feel motivated after listening to that one; it's impossible. (As for her summer playlist? She currently has Bruno Mars and Harry Styles in heavy rotation.)

Holt's brand of pop is genuine. On the slower "History"—a true story about when she was still crazy about her ex and couldn't give full attention to her new boss—she gets to play with vocal textures, and underneath the pitch-perfect melody is an edge; you can hear her authenticity trickle through. "I've always told myself I never want to be a part of a project or a song that doesn't resonate with me in any way. Whether a song is sent to me or I write it, it has to come from the heart, because I feel like people can just see right through that."

Being transparent and connecting with fans is high on Holt's list of priorities. She calls us from Columbia, South Carolina, during week five of her world radio tour, where she's been performing acoustic versions of "History" and charting with fans in cities like Denmark, Norway, Berlin, and all across the US.

"Everyone has been really responding to the song, which makes me really happy. I have a chance to talk with [fans], which is nice because I do it over social media all the time, so to see some of them face to face and have a real life conversation with them is really special. I'm crazy about them," she says. "I met this really, really lovely girl who has been a massive fan since the beginning of *Kickin' It* just a couple months ago. And what's even cooler, we've been Twitter friends since then, too. Meeting her in person for the first time in 6 years was so special."

Holt has been spending a lot of time in the studio lately, writing and recording in hopes of putting out a follow-up to her 2016 Olivia EP, which she says is about meeting up, learning, and shaping yourself into who you want to be. "It's a whole experimental process right now, really figuring out where I want to go lyrically, and where I want to take my sound," she tells us. "I want the lyrics to be authentic to me, and [for] the music [to] fulfill every element of pop, soul, and alternative, and to hear real organic instruments and tons." But the new music won't differ too drastically from her current sound. "I love my first EP so much and feel so proud of it because it's me. Every lyric is an experience of mine and an expression of who I am. I want to continue making music like that," she says.

When it comes to the creative direction of her videos, Holt is just as hands-on. "There've been a few videos in the past that I've done where I had no involvement at all and wasn't stoked with the end result, and I never want that to happen again. I want to have massive say in what goes down in each music video that I'm a part of."

Growing up in Mississippi where she attended theater camp at a young age, eventually landing commercial spots at age 13, Holt says she's always been an extrovert, and it's clear she was born to be a performer. "I was so young and just so in love with the idea of entertaining and moving people with my performance. And every time I walked out on stage I loved it," she remembers. But songwriting is a passion she's newly discovering.

"When I was younger I never considered myself a songwriter. I always considered myself just a singer, but being in rooms with all these writers and producers and bouncing ideas off of each other, and [recording] real life experiences that I've had and putting them into a song is a really exhilarating feeling. Every time I walk into the studio and we write something, whether it's something I'm going to put out or not, I feel really confident and proud of it, and it's worth it. It's fun and it's overwhelming and scary;

you're kind of speaking from your heart and your experiences, which sometimes [I] feel a little timid sharing, but I'm really enjoying it."

If for some reason you haven't already, you're about to see Holt's face everywhere (though with "History" and "Phoenix" at 8 million combined views on YouTube, we're pretty sure you have). She's the new face of Neutrogena (literally), and is making a name for herself in the fashion world with a line of sunnies she recently designed with Perverse. Each of the three designs represents one of the women in her family: herself, her mom, Kimberly, and her sister, Morgan—the latter two, she says, are the most important women in her life.

"I designed each one to our personalities and style. The Kimberly is a cool, trendy, retro vibe, with rose gold lenses. The Morgan is this edgy, spunky, fierce look. And the Liv is this translucent, simple, chic style."

Holt also has two upcoming films, and will star as Tandy in the first live-action iteration of Marvel's *Clash & Dagger* series, which comes out in 2018. Having an athletic background, she performs her own stunts in the drama/action series (her character also shoots light daggers out of her hands, so we're pretty excited to see that next year).

Her upcoming film *Status Update*, where she stars opposite her friend, *R5*'s Russ Lynch (they both worked on sitcoms growing up whose sound stages were right next to each other), is a coming-of-age film (think *Big & Tall* going as *300*) written by Jason Filardi, the writer of *17 Again*. In it, Lynch plays Kyle Moon, a teenager whose family is being torn apart. Kyle moves to a new town and soon discovers that he can alter the future with his status updates on social media. "Then all hell breaks loose," says Holt of the film. "It's an amazing story. I was really happy when I got the opportunity to work on a fun project [with Lynch]. He's very intelligent and has an insane work ethic. I'm very grateful to know him and to have worked with him."

Holt also stars in the Eric Stoltz's upcoming indie flick *Class Rank*, alongside Kristen Chenoweth and Bruce Dern. Her character, Veronica, "only cares about becoming America's next supreme court justice, not about becoming America's Next Top Model," she says.

Research for the role also got Holt into politics, giving her an entirely new perspective and interest in world affairs, but it also gave her the opportunity to think critically about embodying a character, from the books she read in preparation for the role, down to the clothes she wore on set. "I remember when we were in wardrobe they gave me a size too big in jeans, I was like, 'Actually this is perfect. I feel like [Veronica] wouldn't wear tight fitting jeans that show her figure, she'd wear jeans that are kind of baggy, and penny loafers to make her walk less confident.'"

Status Update and *Class Rank* represent a shift in Holt's acting career, which was jump-started when she played Kim Crawford on Disney XD's *Kickin' It*. "I think it was a good transition for me, being able to work on a sitcom every single day for six years, and having that high energy, and [then] going to an indie film where the energy is more relaxed and I'm playing a completely different character. It was a good challenge for me. I feel like that just shapes me into a better human and helps me evolve as an actor."

Holt's roles in these coming-of-age films parallel her life off-screen. A quick scan of the YouTube comments on her single "Phoenix" (which, by the way, are full of adoration) yields fan comments about how much Holt has changed since the Disney series. Like Disney stars turned singer/songwriters before her, she faces the challenging role of growing up in the public eye, but seems to be doing so effortlessly, and luckily, not alone.

"The great thing about having fans watching me grow up is that we all get to grow up together," she tells us. "Some of the things that I'm going through in my life, they may be going through too. And it's a lot less challenging to write music that way... knowing I'm not the only one, everyone is going through something."

Jacket: Gove and Gibbons
Bodycut: Redford
Pants: Thomas Wayne



Dress: Zimmermann



Jacket: Thomas Heise
Skirt: L'Oréal