



Olivia Holt



196



Photography by Shane McCauley

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Currently starring in Freeform's hit '90s thriller *Cruel Summer*, actor and singer **Olivia Holt** talks becoming Kate Wallis, what she's learnt from the show, and how her debut album ushers in a new era for the rising star.



American actress and Hollywood Records-signed singer, Olivia Holt, grew up in a tiny town outside of Memphis, Tennessee. When I ask if she can trace back how her childhood shaped her interest in entertainment, Holt fondly attributes this to her family. "My dad is a singer, and I fell in love with singing and music because of him," the 23-year-old muses. "But my older sister was the creative one in the family. She wrote scripts, songs, and created all these fun characters. She would make me and our little brother put on plays for our family and because of her I fell in love with this creative outlet. I just remember being obsessed with the idea of stepping into another character's shoes." At 10-years-old, her vocal coach told her parents about an exciting opportunity in Los Angeles. So her family decided to turn a business trip into a vacation and see what it was all about. Holt ended up signing with an agency and the rest is history.

Seeing her career quickly hurdle from acting out her sister's DIY scripts to starring in Disney's beloved comedy series *Kickin' It* before the age of 12, means Holt has yet to stop pinching herself. "I think my first [pinch me moment] was when I was 14 or 15 years old, and I was sitting on the couch with my family

watching TV. I saw a commercial for the show I was doing just happen to roll," she reflects. "I think that was the first time where I was like, 'Oh my god, that's me! That's the show that I'm on! I'm doing what I love.' It was wild."

Now, the humble blonde is starring in Freeform's hotly-anticipated psychological thriller, *Cruel Summer*, which boasts Jessica Biel as executive producer. Set in Syklin, Texas, and taking place in the '90s over the course of three summers, the show is about a beloved popular teen-gone-missing – Kate Wallis – performed by Holt. "In the first year '93, we see Kate living what an outsider would say is 'the perfect life.' She comes from a wealthy family, has an attractive boyfriend, and has a great group of friends," Holt shares, ruminating on her biggest role to date. "She just looks like she has it all together, but she's really struggling on the inside, just trying to figure out who she is." Elaborating on the evolution of her complex character, Holt explains how she basically played three different versions of Wallis throughout the show. "Come '94, she's gone through a very traumatic experience, and I think that changed her in a lot of ways and affected her pretty aggressively," she

continues. "And, come '95, she has rebelled and is this total grungy E-girl who is owning her voice, actions, and options – standing up for what she believes in."

Getting signed at just 10-years-old, Holt's undergone a similar transformation. "What shaped me the most as a professional human being is owning my voice – standing my ground," she shares astutely. "Learning how to say no, and knowing that 'no' can be a full sentence. I started out so young in this industry, and there were a lot of people making decisions for me and forming decisions for me that I didn't really know how to use my voice. The best advice I've been given by incredible people who have been in this industry for forever now, has just been learning by watching how they are on set and how they interact with the people around them. And having fun, not taking themselves too seriously, but being serious about the work."

So what does the young star see for herself next on the horizon? "I am currently working on my first album. I've been taking time to prioritise music over the last few years, and I have been exploring my sound and my voice. It's been a really long journey," she shares. "But I finally feel confident and ready to share this new era of music."





Previous left: Dress by CAROLINA HERRERA and rings by BULGARI. Previous right: Top by THE RANGE NYC and tights (worn as headband) by CALZEDONIA. Opposite page: Dress by WESTLY JOHNS, rings by BULGARI and choker necklace by SAPIR BACHAR. This page: Dress by WESTLY JOHNS, ring by BULGARI, earring by SASKIA DIEZ.

Hair by *Ryan Richman* at A-Frame Agency. Makeup by *Tonya Brewer* at Dew Beauty Agency. Special thanks to MSA Studios, Downtown Los Angeles.

