

Her name has become SYNONYMOUS WITH TRAIL-BLAZING FASHION – and now that RIHANNA has her own make-up line and clothing range hitting our stores, she’s set for GLOBAL STYLE DOMINATION. *Grazia* charts her meteoric rise and STYLE EVOLUTION...

Rihanna

“I’d rather be truthful AND TAKE THE BACKLASH”

WHEN RIHANNA ROCKED UP to the Grammy Awards earlier this year in a stunning red custom-made Azzedine Alaïa gown, it was a show-stopping moment for the singer in more ways than one. The 25-year-old, famed for her hipster street style, looked uncharacteristically demure in layers of red chiffon – with only the risqué sheer fabric hinting at her usual boldness.

What’s more, her date for the evening was on-again boyfriend Chris Brown – who famously assaulted her after the same event four years ago. It was their first public appearance together since she showed up to support him at an LA court hearing in February (he faces allegations that he lied about completing his community service) and it seems they were determined to keep tongues wagging at the high-profile industry bash by cuddling up to one another all evening.

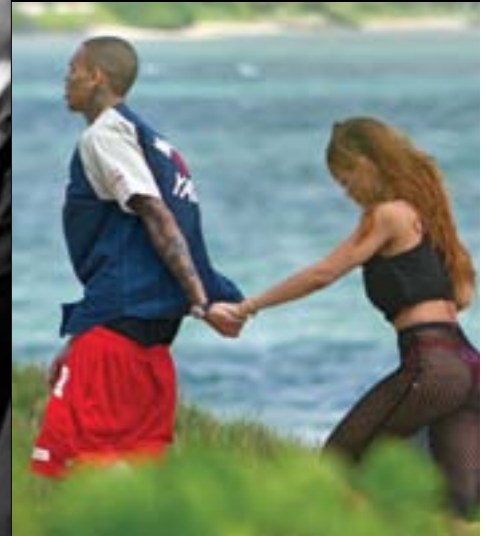
Scooping a gong for Best Video Short for *We Found Love*, RiRi’s hair was styled in tumbling girly waves – a stark change from the trendy pixie cut she sported last year, or her more recent undercut – contributing to an overtly feminine silhouette that was at odds with her usual dark, edgy style.

“I don’t usually like typical ladylike, girly-girly stuff,” she admits. “It would be a look if I were to do it. I always like something that’s a little off, so it’s not just typical or expected.”

The unexpected ‘look’ certainly had the desired impact at the Grammys, with the star rocketing to the top of the best dressed polls, just as fast as she’s been rocketing to the top of the music charts. And



Main: Rihanna wowed the crowd with her uncharacteristically ladylike look at the Grammy Awards in February. Below: Rihanna on holiday with her back-on-again boyfriend, Chris Brown, who assaulted her four years ago



the fashion moment was also an opportunity for her to silence critics of her rekindled relationship with Chris.

“I decided it was more important for me to be happy. I wasn’t going to let anybody’s opinion get in the way of that. Even if it’s a mistake, it’s my mistake,” she says. “After being tormented for so many years, being angry and dark, I’d rather just live my truth and take the backlash. I can handle it.” She adds of her relationship, “It’s different now... We value each other. We know exactly what we have now, and we don’t want to lose that.”

THE UGLY TRUTH

With her new number one album, *Unapologetic*, already spawning two chart-topping singles *Diamonds* and *Stay* (not to mention her current *Diamonds* World Tour), she admits the bad boy rapper remains a strong musical influence. “*Stay* is a story about having love that close and wanting it to last forever. You don’t have that feeling with everybody so when you have it, you don’t want to let go of it. I would definitely say that he [Chris] is the one I have that kind of relationship with,” she says.

The record also marks the dawn of a new brutally honest Rihanna. “When I was making this record I had no intention except the truth. So whatever is there is real. It’s raw. That’s why the album is called *Unapologetic*. I held back before. I didn’t show a lot of myself. I was very guarded. I needed to be open and free and fearless.” ▶

Words: Acife Stuart-Madge Photos: AFP/Getty Images, Getty Images, Splash News, WireImage

Although she has been slammed by feminists for rekindling her affair with Chris, personally and professionally, she gravitates towards strong, confident women and counts Katy Perry among her closest allies (although the pair are rumoured to have drifted apart over her relationship with her ex). “She’s unbelievable,” says Rihanna of her best showbiz friend. “She’s such a strong being.”

FASHION RISKS

If her personal life is tumultuous, Rihanna takes just as many risks with her fashion choices, becoming the poster girl for gutsy, confident street style – effortlessly fusing her signature urban influences with high fashion. She’s covered both British and American *Vogue*, been voted among the 100 Most Influential People by Stella McCartney in *Time* magazine, and among the varsity bomber jackets and emblazoned baseball caps in her eclectic wardrobe are stunning pieces by her go-to designers Gucci, Roberto Cavalli and Giorgio Armani.

The girl with the most-talked-about wardrobe in pop also added designer to her CV this year with a unique high street collection for River Island. “High-street shops pay more attention to the kids on the street than to the runways, so in a way, I like to mix both. I love a high-end bag or jacket with a simple dress. I just thought, I’m going to make something for everybody – every personality, every body type,” says Rihanna.

Teaming up with Adam Selman – who has worked with the singer on her tour costumes – the collection debuted at London Fashion Week in February to critical aplomb. Using a simple palette of red, yellow, navy and black, the collection mixes elegant semi-sheer dresses, denim skirts with cropped tops and floral dresses. “Everything is simple, everything is classic,” says RiRi, adding, “I like stuff that’s easy without trying too hard. I don’t like stuff that’s too contrived.”

BEAUTY BRAND

Rihanna is also venturing into the beauty industry. Fresh from the success of her third perfume, *Nude*, she’s launching her own branded line for MAC this autumn with four different Rihanna collections expected. The first product will be a RiRi Woo lipstick, inspired by her favourite ruby red MAC lipstick *Ruby Woo*. “When you think of make-up, the brand that pops into your mind – for something legit – is MAC,” says the singer. “Whatever colour you want, it’s like, ‘Let’s go to MAC.’ I’ve been using MAC on tour for such a long time, it was a natural fit for me. I have always loved make-up and I always said that if I do it, I want to do it with a credible brand...”

Rihanna sees her new business ventures as a natural extension of her creativity. “Being creative is something that I love so I can put that into different outlets. Music happens to be the first thing that I gravitated to and now music opens doors to just so many different opportunities and they all tie in. My make-up looks, my fashion looks... they help me to express myself as an artist. I think it helps people to understand me or my mood, my story.”

As for the future? She’s hopeful that her on-again relationship with Chris will be the real deal (although as *Grazia* went to press, there were rumours of another bust-up with the *Yeah 3X* singer over her ex-boyfriend Drake). “Now that we’re adults, we can do this right. We got a fresh start and I’m thankful for that. Right now that’s just what we want, a great friendship that’s unbreakable,” she says.

She’s even talking about starting a family, “I will probably have a kid. And I’m praying I can go on vacation for a good month. And I’ll have set some things up so I don’t have to tour for the rest of my life, even though I love touring. I want health and happiness in five years. I want to be healthy and happy.”

One thing is for sure, she is going to set the fashion agenda for a long time to come. **G**

Rihanna is launching four different make-up collections in conjunction with MAC Cosmetics this autumn



STYLE TRANSFORMATION

Since she came onto the scene in 2005, Rihanna has not only demonstrated her versatility as an artist but also showcased her diverse sartorial choices and hairstyles

