



She's a rapper, she's black and she's angry. All at 21. A lot less would dig her into a stereotype. But Azealia doesn't stand for it.

# AZEALIA BANKS

TEXT ROBERTO CROCI



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**“RAPPER, SINGER, ACTRESS. THIS IS WHO I AM”, SHE TELLS ME DESCRIBING HERSELF, LOOKING INTO MY EYES WITH THE LARGEST AND MOST PIERCING EYES I’VE EVER SEEN.**

Azealia Amanda Banks, 21 years old, innocent plaits a la Pocahontas but who enjoys swearing and produce a-la-dockworker-ghetto blaster. Her style is colourful, dramatic and innocent, like a (Neighbor)Hood Bitch perfected on the streets of Harlem.

She started her career as Miss Bank\$ whereas on Twitter she likes to be called Young Rapunzel, voted as the coolest person on the latest NME list, New FeMCee – female equivalent of an MC – following Aaliyah’s footsteps, the hip hop artist who passed away in 2001, when she was 22 years old.

“I used to listen to Aaliyah when I was tiny, but I also admired all that preceded me: Salt-n-Pepa, Lauryn Hill, Queen Latifah and Missy Elliott, even though I don’t sound like any of them. I’m Azealia, my music is unique, just like the twist rap-bitch-shit-house-heavy-pop of my songs, I follow nobody’s footsteps, without being disrespectful, but I’ve had so many f-ups in life that you need to support my cause, Azealia’s cause. Following years of struggle, I’ve managed to get a decent job, a roof over my head, a bed to sleep in and a few pennies aside, you know what I mean? This is my dream, and none of you motherffing bitches out there has helped me get there”.

Last January, Azealia performed at Mugler’s show by Nicola Formichetti (who will go on to direct Liquorice, her latest highly anticipated video) and is celebrated by the NY Times like “a person with a unique sense of style”. While even kaiser Karl Lagerfeld has got her to perform at his place (as in his actual personal residency) in Paris for the launch of the line Karl



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for Net-à-Porter and has wanted her with the new song Fuck Up The Fun at the Japanese presentation of his show by Carine Roitfeld, The Little Black Jacket.

Following the viral explosion of her video 212, the Manhattan area code, with plaits, jean shorts and Mickey Mouse next to Lazy Jay, the author of the instrumental, and the huge success at the latest Coachella festival, Azealia is the uber badass chick of the year, real nasty.

## **AZEALIA, YOUR SONG LYRICS, SEXUALLY SPEAKING, ARE VERY EXPLICIT. ARE YOU LIKE THAT, WITH NO BARRIERS, IN EVERYDAY LIFE?**

“Yeah, what should I be afraid of? I don’t need a man to handle my career. I get angry for the fact that many women don’t realise the power they have, because we’ve been fooled for hundreds of years by men who made us believe they were the power. I always say what I think, I am an energetic person, I am a Gemini, with a complex personality: I’m often confused, sometimes I feel a hypocrite, sometimes I don’t know what I want, others I have a very clear ideas, especially when it comes to the music I want to make, I want to be myself. Music helps me develop particular sensitivities and makes us explore abstract places of our own mind, giving me the opportunity to run away from social and economical structures of our society. Honestly, I’ve always wondered how I would get rid of myself, and with music I have found an answer. Don’t try to box me up in some genre, I don’t follow anyone, my journey is different from anyone else, I do what the fuck I want”.



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**YOU STUDIED ACTING AT LAGUARDIA HIGH SCHOOL OF PERFORMING ARTS, THE SAME ONE AS LIZA MINNELLI, AL PACINO, NICKI MINAJ AND OF THE TV SHOW FAME. WAS IT HARD TO BE NOTICED AMONGST ALL THOSE TALENTS?**

“It might be hard for some perhaps, but I never had any issues. I’ve always had a strong personality, I’ve always known how to make room for myself when it was necessary. I might give the impression that I am very presumptuous, in reality I simply have a very clear idea of what I want. I like myself, I don’t have any problems admitting to it”.

**WHEN DID YOU START RAPPING?**

“I started acting when I was a child, but after being rejected at every single audition, I decided to start rapping. I was 16, I tried it for a laugh, as a reaction to all the disappointments. When I was studying theatre at LaGuardia, I found myself an agent and I started to work freelance with an agency. But I couldn’t get any good roles and at that point I tried to change my life, writing the first songs – first ones where R&B – that I never recorded because I felt insecure of my singing abilities. That’s why I turned to rap: I knew that sooner or later it would have worked out. I had a plan, be noticed as a rapper and get out of the acting world. So far, it worked”.

**HOW WAS YOUR CHILDHOOD?**

“It was tough, my dad died at 63 of pancreatic cancer, and my mother, who at the time was 32, reacted violently towards me because she was stressed at work. I remember very little, I was only 2 years old. At 18, I was living on my own, I didn’t have money to pay the rent and they kicked me out. I run away to Montreal to find a sense to my life. Since then, I have worked with many men who took advantage of my creativity, male managers who put the



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wrong ideas into my head, that wanted me to sing their stupid little songs. I got rid of them all, music saved my life. Mine, not someone else's".

## **FUTURE?**

"Smorgasbord. I want to create sounds that are smorgasbord, a variety that has no equals, that you can't categorise. I don't want to be boxed into the electro, hip hop category. My next album – due to be released in September – will be called *Broke With Expensive Taste*, a music that will make you feel alive, the story of a girl who's trying to make it in the hardest cities of all, New York. In the end, she proves to all of those who didn't believe in her that after working hard, she manages to get what she wanted. She needs to get what she can get! Yo all!". ●

