

WHO

COULD

ASK

FOR

ANYTHING

MORE?

With A-list collaborations and club-filling anthems under her belt,
this year singer-songwriter Bebe Rexha is taking centre stage.

Photography Ben Rayner Fashion Maggie Fox Words Laura Isabella





Previous page left: Top MODEL'S OWN, jeans LEVI'S at FILTH MART; Previous page right: Jacket STYLIST'S OWN, bra MOSCHINO shorts FILTH MART
This page: Top BEYOND RETRO jacket FILTH MART

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Lobe Rexha (née Bleeta Rexha) is sitting in a French café in LA when she picks up my call. The 26-year-old singer-songwriter and producer is taking a well-earned morning break from her hectic career, which has seen her pen chart-stomping records for everyone from Eminem and Rihanna to Tinashe and Selena Gomez. She's a pop-powerhouse in her own right too, releasing debut EP "I Don't Wanna Grow Up" in 2015, and amassing around a billion Spotify streams, 1.3 billion YouTube/Vevo views and 10 million single sales, no less. "I always had a passion for music," Rexha tells me, sipping her coffee. "I knew it was gonna be a major part of my life, 100%. All the parents would laugh it off, but I knew I was going to make a living in the music business."

Her sound is an electronic infused blend of hip-hop and sass-packed pop, and is — needless to say — electric and fully addictive. Brooklyn born and raised, Rexha recorded her first song in Staten Island as a young teenager. "I had a friend at school whose father had a recording studio in the basement, I wrote a song and recorded it and we made a beat for it." Rexha began eschewing typical high school activities to spend her time on furthering her music career, missing everything from prom to graduation. She focused instead on music industry networking to distract from the trappings of teendom.

"Ever since way back then, I would put songs on MySpace to connect with producers... It's very interesting the networking that happened on there." At 15, Rexha submitted a song at NARAS' (National Academy of Arts & Science) annual New York

"Grammy Day" and earned herself a "Best Teen Songwriter" award amongst 700 entries. One thing led to another, and she got snapped up by BMI — a songwriters' publishing company.

"The songs I've given to other people were all originally written for my project," she tells me. "And then, you know, sometimes you have to take things away, because you want to grow in your career and it's just the right thing to do. Eminem comes knocking on your door and what are you going to do? Hold onto those songs forever?" She breathes out heavily, thinking for a moment. "It's such an amazing opportunity, really. It could change your life — for me it did." At that, as if by timing magic, over the phone I hear a fan walk up to the singer and pant some appreciation her way.

It's not just the LA locals who are mega-fans of hers: Rexha has found a kindred spirit in Queen Nicki Minaj. "She's such a bad bitch!" she enthuses, giggling. "I wrote [single 'No Broken Hearts'] and I ended up playing it to the guy who manages Nicki Minaj. He was like: 'This is amazing let me send it to her', so he did and she heard it, loved it, cut it and sent it back." The result is a badass blend of cutting rap and power-pop hooks, a track made for dancing on a night out with your girls in a neon-lit nightclub. "We really connected as a duo at the video shoot," Rexha continues. "It was awesome, she's like the ultimate badass. I grew up listening to Nicki... she knows what she wants, I was so inspired by her."

Rexha has since been working on her much anticipated album debut. "I'm really proud of it," she beams. "It's very deep and insightful. People I've played it to have said it sounds really sexy — which I love." Collaborations, naturally, are a common thread on the record, with Rexha working with everyone from revered songwriter Lauren Christy to Ty Dolla \$ign, the two coming together on Rexha's favourite album cut, "Bad Bitch". "It's all about being a strong woman and moving to LA." She explains. "It's like: 'This is me, take me or leave me'. That's what the whole record is like." What's next? "I'm gonna go on tour! I wanna see my fans, to connect to my fans. I've opened up for Nicki, Nick Jonas and Travie McCoy, but now it's time — even if it's a small tour... to do my own, for my fans and for myself. I just want to sing the songs off the record and see where it takes me. That's my goal for this year." As far as we can tell, nothing's going to stop her.



This page: Coat: MODELS OWN; top: FILTH MART
Opposite page: Shirt: LEVI'S, jeans: SEAFARER, sunglasses: ROKIT
Hair: Cate Noble / make-up by Sonjae Ganzer using VARS

