

Silk dress with sequinned appliqué,
Marc Jacobs.





X FACTOR

Star blogger and cover girl Kristina Bazan must be doing something right – over 2 million followers on Instagram and the hundreds who turn up at her meet-and-greets can't be wrong – and now she's using her phenomenal success to live out her music dreams

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A WEEK BEFORE OUR initial shoot date, Kristina Bazan (@kristinabazan) is booked to star in a major campaign in Geneva but refuses to divulge any details, for reasons of confidentiality. We respect her kind of professionalism – something you don't often see in a 23-year-old. James Chardon, her manager, ex-boyfriend and co-founder of her blog Kayture, politely apologises on her behalf over Whatsapp, and offers us not one but two alternative shoot dates. “She will *definitely* arrive in time for the cover shoot,” he promises. We take Chardon's word for it, sort out the logistics remotely from our Singapore office, rebook the looks, photographer, crew, studio, locations and soon, here we are, on a Monday morning at Hubble Studio in Downtown Los Angeles, waiting to begin the day's shoot. Kristina arrives, with a cold she caught probably from the fatigue of travelling across multiple continents within a short time frame. With a nasal voice, she apologises for wearing makeup to cover the redness around the nose, and pulls out a couple of wigs – her disguises, she calls them – and asks if we need them for the shoot. As she puts on a short skirt, she requests for tights. “Sorry, it's winter now and my legs are too fair.”

It's these little idiosyncracies that give away her constant quest for perfection which, incidentally, got her one of the most coveted campaigns – a reported seven-figure deal with L'Oreal Paris, the highest amount ever signed for an influencer, placing her alongside Hollywood A-listers Julian Moore and Naomi Watts, and top models Karlie Kloss and Barbara Palvin. Kristina is certainly not your average 20-something. The self-made Swiss-born entrepreneur and, in her own words, “creative mind”, first got noticed by the Internet community when she shared her OOTDs on fashion website Lookbook.nu. Chardon, her then-boyfriend, encouraged her to start a fashion blog and six months later, Vogue packed the 17-year-old off to Tokyo for Fashion Night Out – the event that kick-started her blogging career and catapulted her to international stardom. And now, with a single launched last August, she's on her way to a fledgling music career.

Our cover girl tells us more about it, gets candid about the flak that bloggers have been receiving, and opens up about her transformation from girl-next-door to edgy street style star.

What's your earliest fashion memory?

When I was four or five, I would put on a Madonna music video and ask my mum if I could borrow her bra and lipsticks. To me, fashion is always linked to this idea of building yourself as an alter ego.

Did you always want to be a fashion blogger?

No. When I started, I didn't know that people could make a career out of blogging. For me it's always been easier to write than talk, so my blog was like a diary. I'm from a small village in Switzerland and I thought I might be able to make friends with other girls who might be interested in fashion through my blog. My dream is to do music, to be an artist and to express something that is more than just my face or myself. It's really challenging, but I hope that I'll be able to achieve that by the age of 30 and my whole business will not revolve around how pretty I am.

Tell us about your music career.

I'd always carry a little notebook around and write songs in it. I decided to send a demo to my agent in Los Angeles and things took off from there. It takes so much time to finish a project, that's why I wish I started earlier. It involves so many people and it's not something you can do by yourself, like blogging. Now I'm signed with a really good manager and things are starting to shape up. I'm really excited!

Bloggers have been receiving a lot of flak. Your thoughts?

A lot of people don't value the fact that we started from nothing, and work hard to build our own fame and image. We now get the same front row seats as some of the biggest people in the industry. We get huge contracts and I think that makes a lot of people really angry. It's very sad that people think bloggers are just narcissists and self-promoters, when the real reason why bloggers get so much attention is because we make fashion more democratic and accessible to the masses. When I was growing up, I used to buy fashion magazines but was never able to relate to the models or editors because it seemed like such a cool industry that is not open to real people. But bloggers manage to step in to create pictures that look like something that could be in a magazine. We tell stories from a more personal perspective and bring something a little more human into fashion.

Your personal style has evolved over the years. You were that feminine, girl-next-door who wore plenty of prints and colours. Now, you're edgy, street and pretty much the cool girl. How did the change come about?

When I started blogging, I was trying to figure out who I was, and I think the problem when you start so young is that you want to please your audience. I notice that my readers really liked it when I was always happy, and posting

pictures of flowers and pretty food. I was so obsessed with the idea of wanting my followers to like me. It got to a point where it wasn't the right reflection of myself. My personality has always been more introverted, even though I don't seem like it. I read a lot, I'm really into art and geeky things and I love having deep conversations. I guess the way I portray myself now is a more realistic reflection of my personality.

What does it take to turn blogging into a business, and do you have a specific way of approaching things or a strategy?

You definitely need to have a business mind. I'm always very passionate about business, although I hate having “money talks” with brands. It's always my manager who does that. I think it's really important to stick to your values and stick to your long-term goals instead of just rushing things, working with everyone, accepting to work for free. For me, blogs are like brands – you have a whole artistic direction, but you have to know what your worth is in order to negotiate deals with brands.

What's the craziest thing you've done in your career?

I used to do a lot of meet-and-greets two years ago but I don't do it anymore because it got too crazy. I would announce it on my Instagram and tell my followers to meet me at a certain place. The last time in Paris, over a hundred people showed up, so I ended up staying for hours. It was insane and it can get really dangerous. People can actually hurt you. Thankfully, that's never happened because we always have security, but it was really intense. As much as I love my followers, I think I've got to protect myself and keep a distance.

Tell me about your most memorable project.

It's hard to say which one is special, but the L'Oreal family is the most incredible one to be part of because everyone is so close to each other. It's the biggest contract I've signed and they just renewed it for another year. I'm going to do the Cannes Film Festival again. I did it last year and it was unbelievable. I walked the red carpet with some of the biggest stars in the industry and had to pinch myself to make sure I wasn't dreaming!

If you could travel back in time, what would you change?

I wish I would have believed myself a little earlier and pursued music. For a really long time, I was trying to shut this dream because it seemed so unrealistic. When I was growing up in Switzerland, I would be too shy to tell my friends that I love singing. But blogging helps me to gain confidence and, now, to pursue music!

Satin crêpe playsuit
with lace panel and
silk toile jacket,
Chanel.
Bra top, Kristina's own.





Cotton lace dress with leather belt, **Bottega Veneta.**

Wool cropped sweater
and leather pants,
Fendi.
Metal frames,
Ray-Ban.
Tights, stylist's own.





Tulle dress, knit underwear, leather boots, grosgrain ribbon choker with metal hardware and metal rings, Dior.



Cotton T-shirt, tulle skirt, wool jacket, knit underwear, leather pumps, grosgrain ribbon choker with metal hardware and metal rings, **Dior**.
Metal frames, **Ray-Ban**.



Cashmere wool sweater, **Michael Kors Collection**. Leather Kiki platform boots, **Marc Jacobs**.
Leather backpack, **Chanel**. Tights, stylist's own.

PRODUCER **W. LIM PRODUCTIONS** MAKEUP **ANGELINA CHENG USING NARS**
HAIR **SHERIDAN WARD/THE WALL GROUP USING ORIBE** PHOTOGRAPHY ASSISTANT **KEISUKE**
STYLING ASSISTANT **CLARA BENICE** HAIR ASSISTANT **ALEXANDER ADAMS**
SPECIAL THANKS TO **HUBBLE STUDIO LOS ANGELES**

Duchesse silk jacket
and silk shirt with
Chantilly lace inserts,
Gucci.

