



In-spireLS love to get the opportunity to gain more insight into the lives of the world's biggest stars and we were honoured to get the chance to interview singer, songwriter and actress Mya. Although, she hasn't been on our screens, she has been actively working on a number of exciting projects and the music is bigger than ever before. The grammy award winning artist recently celebrated over 14 years in the entertainment industry so it was only right that we got in contact to learn more about her phenomenal journey, to find out what drives her, who she sees as her biggest supporters and what inspires her the most. We know you will enjoy this one. Be inspired!

Mya thank you for taking the time to talk with us.....

M: My pleasure.

Through researching about you I found you are listed as being a singer/songwriter, record producer, dancer, actress, model, activist and philanthropist. Is this even possible? How does one woman accomplish all of this and at such a young age?

M: There's really no secret. I've always just done what I love and that consists of many things. Why not? There's so much more to learn and discover. I'm still young by the way (laughs).

Many of us first found out about you after your featuring on Fugees star Pras's 'Ghetto Superstar' which was an international success and brought with it worldwide success for you. Were you at all prepared for how big the song was going to be and how did you deal with the immediate acclaim of it?

M: I'm not sure it ever registered. I've always just liked making music and performing. Charts, numbers and popularity is something I never pay attention to. If it works, great. If it doesn't, I had a ball.



You signed a recording contract deal with Interscope aged only 16. With so many young artists chasing fame and seeking agency representation, what would you say made you stand out from the rest?

M: I started making my first album at 16. But I technically wasn't signed to Interscope until after my first album was released. Being the only R&B /Pop artist on the label at the time was a little risky for a Rap/Rock label, so I had to prove myself first. I can't really speak for others. I can't speak for the company. But I can say that I am a hard worker, I'm professional, punctual and never afraid of taking direction, criticism or being guided.

It could be said that you had entertaining in your blood, having began taking ballet lessons from the age of two and adding jazz and tap dancing into the mix. When did you learn that you wanted to pursue performing as a career?

M: At the age of 4 I knew I just wanted to sing when I heard my Dad rehearsing on Easter Eve in church. At the age of 10, I saw my first Broadway play “Jelly’s Last Jam” starring Gregory Hines in New York City. I knew for sure then that I wanted to pursue some form of performing professionally. My interest was set on musical theatre.

Was it challenging to manage your creative commitments with your academic studies? If yes, how did you establish a balance?

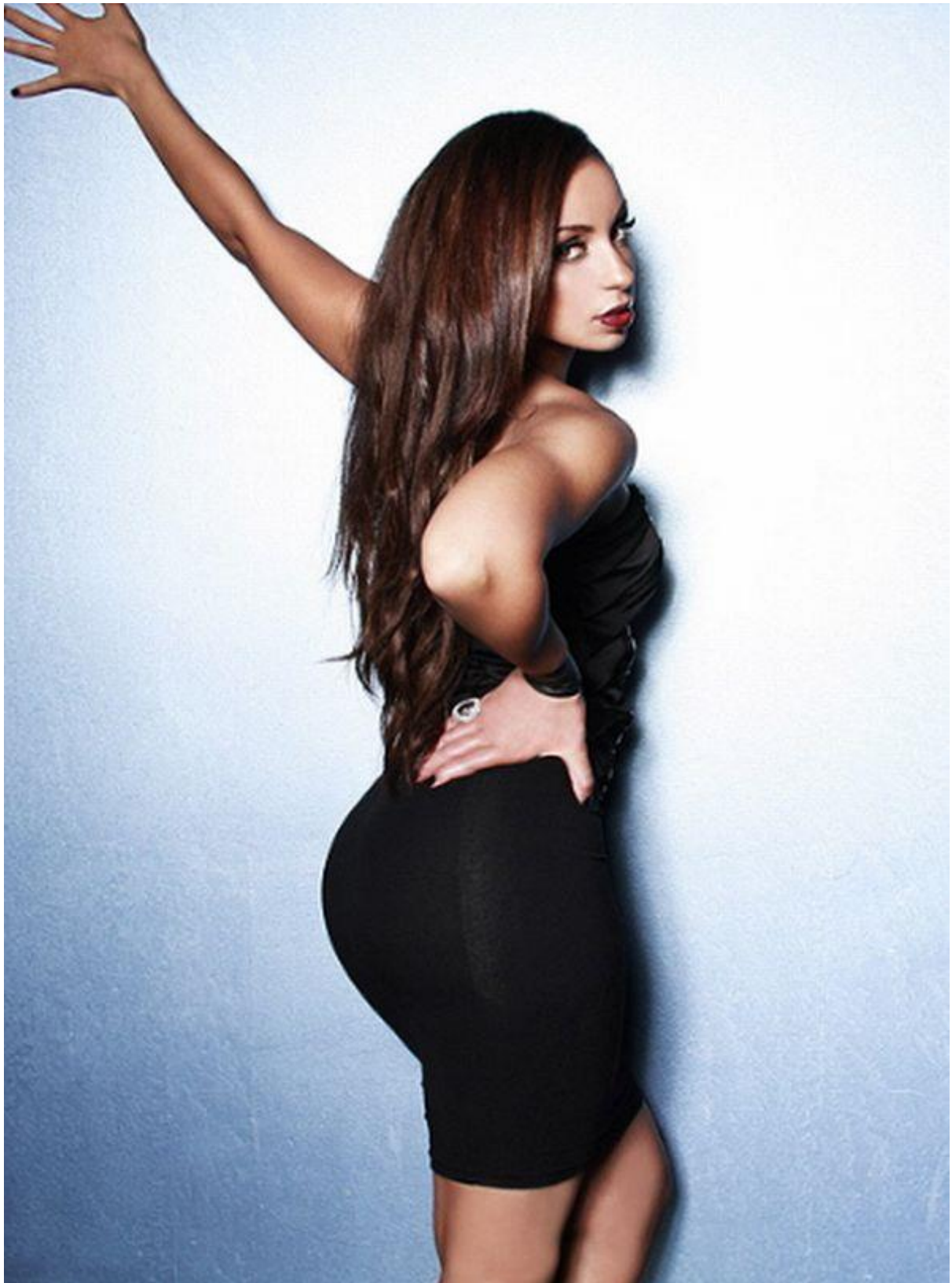
M: My first year of college was definitely tough as it required me to travel for the recording of my first album.

You released your debut album through Interscope Records in 1998 and it sold over one million copies in the United States. How proud are you of this accomplishment and were your prepared for the success of the album?

M: I’m thankful for the opportunity and recognition of what the business considers success. I’d say it was a stepping stone, but my focus is more on giving the best of myself to the world.

From that album, you had the opportunity to collaborate with a number of artists, including the platinum award winning singer Sisqo. What was it like working with Sisqo?

M: Working with Sisqo and all of the members of Dru Hill was really great. They’re all so talented, play instruments, write, vocal produce and know their harmonies. But the feeling of having a camp was more even comforting just stepping into the game as a solo artist.



I remember rushing out to buy your album 'Fear of Flying' released in 2000 and was completely blown away by the production and overall content of the songs. How much of the albums content was based on personal experience?

M: I was quite young and hadn't lived every experience I spoke about. But some of my girlfriends, girls I mentored and even family were references I was inspired by. I'd say about 30% of the personal songs were from personal experience. The Mya today has been through it all and is better woman because of it.

‘Case of the Ex’ was the lead single from the album and not only was the song a certified smash but it also demonstrated your dancing skills and vocal range. The concept behind the video was also fresh and current. How much input did you have in the overall video and in general now, how much creative control do you have over your work?

M: I am always involved in every aspect of everything I do for my videos, from the concept, choreography, styling, editing and final edits. I was able to choreograph or freestyle my own solo parts for Case of the Ex. Tina Landen was responsible for the group choreography. The location and concept of the video was her idea.

You took your career to the next level when you collaborated with fellow music stars Christina Aguilera, Missy Elliot, Pink and Lil Kim on the Grammy award winning ‘Lady Marmalade’. How did you get involved with the project and how prepared were you for the success of it?

I originally was not supposed to be on the song, but because the company I was signed to was releasing the actual soundtrack they suggested me for a different appeal.

What was it like working with so many other talented musicians?

M: It was refreshing to finally get the opportunity to work with other females and female artists, rehearse, record and perform together. Every lady had their own style and nitch.

You have had your fair share of negative press as many artists have. How have you managed to deal with it and in general, how do you face all matters of negativity?

M: Anything with great risk comes with great reward. Grades K-12 prepared me for teasing, rumors, lies, popularity contests, criticism, jealousy and cattiness of the business. I've learned that I can not control what the press chooses to create or do. I mind my business, make my money, and enjoy my life. That's really it.



After a label change the release of your fourth studio album was delayed when your label accidentally leaked the album. This must have affected you in a major way. It also led to you moving onto an independent label. Having been signed to major labels throughout your entire musical career, how did you deal with the transition?

M: Devastation can bring about blessings if we can manage to deal with it in a healthy way. Fortunately the fighter in me was propelled to just do it myself and that's just what I did in 2008. Independently and on a smaller scale, I've released an album every year since on my label Planet 9. I've acquired so much knowledge and skill as a business woman through these transitions and I'm in a wonderful place spiritually and mentally.

Your independent music label, which was based in Japan, meant that you evidently recorded two albums for the Japanese market, with K.I.S.S being one of the two. How different was it to promote your music to an entirely different demographic and what did you take or gain from the experience?

M: It was really no different. It was just on a smaller scale. The only difference is that I was solely responsible for executive producing, scouting the producers/production, engineering it

myself, budgeting all monies, controlling the budget and paying songwriters, producers, etc to create the project. Everything turned out exactly the way I wanted it.

You also recorded a US version of K.I.S.S. For your earlier work, how much would you say your style has developed and what can music listeners who haven't been in touch with you expect from the music you are currently releasing compared with your sound from previous hits such as; 'Fear of Flying'?

M: Classic Mya albums are always a melting pot of many flavors of music. But my mixtapes or specialty projects give me the freedom to focus on one particular sound. Sugar & Spice I specifically created for an R&B/Pop/JPop market. My mixtape Beauty & the Streets Vol. 1 focused on a more HIP HOP/R&B sound. However, the K.I.S.S. album was made with the world in mind. I'm giving you club bangers, substance, sexy slow jams, heartfelt ballads, contemporary dance records. Music is music but the flavors range from R&B, J-Pop, Dancehall, Electro, Strip Club, and Bedroom.

Things began to pick up the pace even more when in between the recordings of each album, you launched your own independent record label. How did you find the overall process of launching this and what would you say were the pros and cons of this venture?

M: I launched my label Planet 9 in 2008 on the first indie compilation "Sugar & Spice". The process is always challenging when you are the artist but also the bank, the manager, the accountant, the engineer, executive producer. But it's essential to wear many hats when you love to do something and want to see it come to life.



Like many artists in our generation you also ventured onto the reality tv route and placed a very impressive 2nd in last seasons ‘Dancing with the Stars’ What was it like to put on your dancing shoes again and to perform weekly in front of the world?

M: Not quite reality TV, more of an interactive competition show. But it was quite fun putting on a new type of dancing shoe I’d never experimented with before, having a partner & being under pressure in front of the world definitely fed into my competitive spirit.

For a time, you also acted in a number of hit films including: Chicago, Shall We Dance and Cursed. Out of all of your roles, what would you list as the major highlight out of the lot and why?

M: I think Chicago was the ultimate experience having the opportunity to watch Rob Marshall in action. He oversaw every creative aspect of the film (wardrobe, recordings, acting direction, choreography, rehearsal, directing).

Who would you list as your biggest supporters?

M: My parents, my team and my fans are the biggest supporters.

What in-spires you the most within your life?

M: The opportunity to elevate and touch people inspires me.

What would you say are the main factors behind your success to date?

M: Though I feel that I'm just now beginning my career as a complete artist, I'd have to say supportive parents, God given talent, humble spirit and the willingness to put in extra time, learn new skills has contributed to what people consider my success to date.

What part/s of your career are you most proud of?

M: In addition to mentoring youth and charitable causes, I'm most proud of maintaining my integrity, saying no to assholes, never turning to drugs or alcohol for escape or comfort, walking away when walking away was absolutely necessary, never giving up on Mya and strengthening my faith.

Do you have any quotations that you live by, if yes what are they?

M: Yes. "KissMy-A" (Laughs) it always gets me through.

What can we expect from you over the coming months?

M: I've recently partnered up with clothing line Koshie O for their "The Koshie O Woman" Campaign. I'll be designing a few pieces and samples of these pieces will be available for buyers this July/August and will be available for consumers in Spring 2013. I will be donating a percentage of sales to the global humanitarian group Mercy Corps.

Any plans to come to the UK?

M: I was just in Romania & Holland three months ago. We are doing a K.I.S.S. Tour in Australia in July and hopefully by August I will hit more of the UK.



Where and how can In-spireLS readers keep up with you?

M: I am missmya on TWITTER. My website is myamya.com where shows, events and projects are updated daily.

Lastly, in the face of adversity, what would Mya do?

M: Mya will always remain Mya. I'm a Libra and I aim for perfect balance. So remaining optimistic to something negative will eventually bring about harmony.

Thank you Mya for answering our questions; please round them off by completing these sentences....

I am at my best when..... **I've gotten some damn sleep.**

Self belief can..... **take you all over the world beyond the clouds to outer space.**

Dreams are.... **attainable when prayed upon & acted upon over a long period of time.**

I am most passionate about..... **seeing my mother happy & improving the quality of life for as many people possible.**

I am at my happiest when..... **I have a plate of a home cooked meal in front of me!**

Focus can.... **help us reach our destination without crashing.**

Three words that best describe me are.... **simple, caring and patient.**

I am a 'Wonderwoman' because..... **I make 'em wonder. (laughs)**