

inVOGUE

EDITED BY ANINDITA GHOSE

INSPIRE

All about that bass

They've been more than just role models for those who don't fit the mannequin mould. From music to comedy, blogs to books—*Vogue* meets the ladies sounding the clarion call for curvy women everywhere

Meghan Trainor, singer

Her 2014 body pride anthem ushered a new "era of the booty"

"Yeah it's pretty clear, I ain't no size two/ But I can shake it, shake it like I'm supposed to do..." the lyrics go. Before her album released last year, more than 70 million people had already watched—and shaken it to—"All About That Bass", the hit single written and performed by 21-year-old Meghan Trainor. "When I wrote it, the words flew out of my mouth—I had the lyrics down in about 45 minutes," says Trainor. She admits to feeling out of place as a teen: "I grew up in Nantucket, in Massachusetts, and played football in school. My crowd was all the skinny, beautiful, popular girls and I was their... thicker friend. This one dude I was in love with told me in seventh grade, 'You'd be so much hotter if you were 10 pounds lighter.' It crushed me. [But] whenever I said, 'I'm fat,' my mom always told me—and still does—'You need to stop. You are beautiful.'" And that's precisely the message that Trainor, who currently lives in Nashville with her two kittens, wants to drive home: "We should all have a big banner, or maybe a neon sign, in our bedrooms that says: Every inch of you is perfect." —*Shaun Dreisbach* >

"I just wish I'd loved myself more growing up. I was so cute"
—MEGHAN TRAINOR

NOISEMAKING MOMENT

'All About That Bass' became the longest-running number one hit in Epic Records' history, beating even Michael Jackson's numbers. It spent eight weeks topping the Billboard Hot 100.

PHOTO: TOM SCHRIMMACHER; STYLIST: SOPHIE PERQ; HAIR: GAVIN; MAKE-UP: TRACY; ALFOJARA/ART DEPT; MANICURE: MARY SOUL/RAY BROWN

**NOISEMAKING
MOMENT**

Her most popular entry to date, a photo series that shows Awasthi clad in a resplendent grey tutu, scored over 13,000 shares on Pinterest. “[I’m having] a Carrie Bradshaw moment at the Haute Curves Fashion Show in Los Angeles,” she says. “It’s the most popular post in the history of the blog.”

*Tanesha Awasthi,
fashion blogger*

Her award-winning blog instructs women with unconventional body types on how to dress—and feel—their best

As the effortlessly elegant face of *Girl With Curves*, an acclaimed lifestyle, fashion and beauty blog that encourages pairing high-end labels with more accessible brands, the San Francisco-based Awasthi traded in a tech career for the sartorial world over four years ago. What began as a week of sharing a handful of outfit ideas on Flickr and Tumblr—“my images ended up with over 400 positive comments referring to me as a ‘curvy girl,’” she explains—is now a reliable source for plus-size women worldwide, with nearly a million Instagram devotees and an eponymous fashion line (catering to sizes 12 through 24) that stocks chic and feminine staples like tulle party dresses and frill-hemmed blazers. “But my blog means so much more to me than the materialism of fashion,” insists Awasthi, who is of Native American, Creole, Cuban, Jamaican, German and Russian descent (though her husband is Indian, which explains her surname). “My goal is to show women that once you feel good on the inside, your confidence radiates on the outside.” —Aarti Virani >



NOISEMAKING MOMENT

"The hubbub surrounding my recent Calvin Klein lingerie campaign was life-changing and led me to talk to other under-represented women about my own struggles—so rewarding," she says.

Myla Dalbesio, model

She proves that models can be size 0 or size 16—and everything in between

This former Miss Teen Wisconsin, an inspiring spokesperson for fashion's "inbetweens"—women who don't ascribe to the near-impossible size-zero tag and don't claim plus-size territory either— inadvertently ignited a social media controversy after appearing in a snug black bra for Calvin Klein's "Perfectly Fit" campaign last fall. "I don't really have any options [when it comes to my weight]," admits Dalbesio, whose size 10 figure was the subject of scrutiny and many incensed Tweets by those unconvinced she could speak for curvy women. "Right now, the modelling industry focuses on extremes and a lot of us in the middle are just trying to hammer out what it means to be this size." Up next for the trailblazer? A film that talks about the link between body image and power. —Aarti Virani

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Mindy Kaling, comedian and producer

She writes, produces and stars in *The Mindy Project*, a TV show that gives us an honest look at how women really see their bodies

You might be more inclined to associate body confidence on television with the likes of Lena Dunham—after all, she played ping pong topless on *Girls*. But our vote's on Mindy Kaling. Though she keeps her shirt on, Kaling gives us Mindy Lahiri, the vivacious ob-gyn she plays on *The Mindy Project*.

Lahiri ("I am a hot, smart woman with an ass that doesn't quit," she quips in season two) often faces digs from men on the show—which Kaling has woven into the script. "I wanted to write a female character who's strong enough that a man criticising her weight can sting but not devastate her," she says. "Too many women give others too much power over their self-worth." And if it seems like Lahiri is preoccupied with her body, well, that's deliberate. Kaling wishes that one day we won't have these discussions at all. "Thinking about body image is such a small part of what I use my brain for," she says, "and I want other women to follow suit." —Megan Angelo >

NOISEMAKING MOMENT

After over seven years of co-writing *The Office*, Kaling's *The Mindy Project* premiered in 2012 and went on to win Most Exciting New Series (Critics' Choice Television Awards) and Outstanding Producer (Gracie Awards). The show has earned awards every year since.





*Caitlin Moran,
columnist and writer*

While body shaming is a serious matter, her humour-laced columns and books remind us to laugh at ourselves

"I am 13 stone (83 kilograms). I have no money, no friends, and boys throw gravel at me when they see me," writes Moran, recounting an abysmal 13th birthday in her first book, *How To Be A Woman*. The endearing yet irreverent *Times* (London) columnist won hearts for her brave, guffaw-inducing 21st-century feminist manifesto, a bestselling memoir that tackled everything from fat rolls and sagging breasts to abortions and workplace sexism, nearly three years ago. And her ability to see the lighter side is contagious. In *How To Be A Woman*, she writes: "... Why is being fat treated as a cross between terrible shame and utter tragedy? Something that—for a woman—is seen as falling somewhere between sustaining a sizable facial scar and sleeping with the Nazis?" For her second act, published last year, Moran tries her hand at fiction with the similarly titled, *How To Build A Girl*. Centred on a 14-year-old protagonist born to a working-class English family, the book talks about a quest for reinvention, yearning for the usual elusive suspects: popularity, love and, alas, the perfect body. —Arti Virani ■

**NOISEMAKING
MOMENT**

How To Be A Woman, which she wrote in just five months, sold over 4,00,000 copies across 16 countries, in addition to earning Moran a glowing *New York Times* review, which declared it "a book that needed to be written."