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Someone Like Adele

▶ “I don’t consider myself a singer.” That’s one of the first things Adele says when we sit down with her in a cozy lounge area of the XL Recordings office in London. Of course, that statement is absolutely insane after the year she’s had—her album, *21*, has broken so many industry records, it’s hard to keep track.

With prompting, she explains further. “My favorite singers are Etta James and Aretha Franklin. If you were to look up the word *singer* in the dictionary, you’d see their names. Not mine,” she says with a wave of a perfectly manicured hand decked out with multiple gold rings.

While she’s too humble to compare herself to such legends, there’s a good chance that in 30 years, people will be talking about Adele in the same terms. Her emotional lyrics and powerhouse vocals transcend trends and give her music staying power. Adding to her appeal is the fact that she writes all her own material and her favorite topic—heartbreak—hits a nerve that never stops being raw. If you’ve ever had a relationship end painfully, you know exactly what she’s feeling in every verse—from wanting to get back with a guy to wishing he’d burn in hell.

She may tap in to deep and sometimes depressing emotions like no one else when she sings, but it’s refreshing to find out that she’s not at all serious or morose—Adele talks fast, laughs loud, and says *fuck* more than Lil Wayne and Eminem combined.

“Ugh, people must think I am this total mope,” she says. “But I’m really

She’s famous for heart-wrenching ballads—and they really are based on her painful romantic past (get all the details here)—but this soulful singer wants you to know: She’s far happier than her songs let on.

By Bethany Heitman



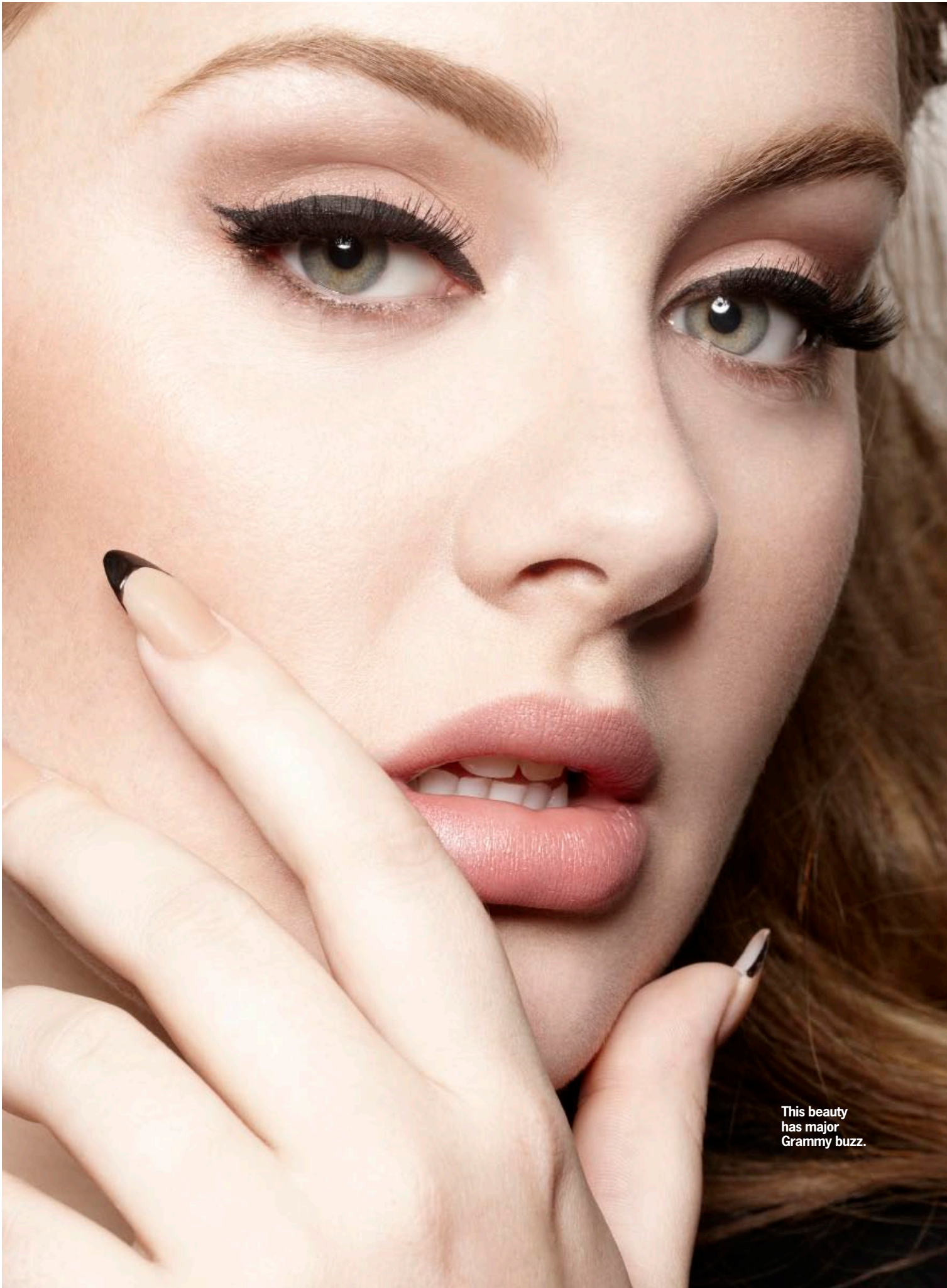
not. I’m actually quite fun and happy most of the time.” Perhaps it’s because she’s so content these days that she has no qualms discussing her past—the good and the bad. From the shockingly easy way she landed her first record deal to details she’s never revealed about her biggest breakup, Adele told us everything. . . .

Starting Off on the Right Note

Raised in London, Adele Laurie Blue Adkins knew she wanted to be a professional singer by the age of 12. “We’d be watching *The X Factor*, and my family would tell me I should go on,” she recalls, smoothing her brown Stella McCartney poncho over her black leggings. “But then you’d see a parent on the show saying ‘My child is the next Mariah,’ and the kid would be rubbish. So I’d look at them and think, *Fuck you, you just want me to be embarrassed for a good laugh.*”

She decided to attend The BRIT School, a performing-arts high school, and during her first year, a certain alum hit it big, stoking Adele’s passion for singing even more. “That year,

Fashion director: Michelle McCool. Hair: Kerry Wam for John Frieda at The Milton Agency. Makeup: Michael Ashton at The Milton Agency using Chanel. Manicure: Mike Pocock at Streeters for nailrock.com. See page 227 for stopping information.



This beauty
has major
Grammy buzz.

THE COSMO QUIZ

Name: Adele *appropriate*

Nickname: ~~Adelle~~ Bitch

You know you're in love when you don't overthink anything.

To relax, I:

- a. Bake cupcakes.
- b. Take a long, hot bath.
- c. Drink a glass of wine.
- d. Watch trashy reality TV.
- e. Other: _____



I've always wished I were better at dancing like Beyoncé
oh oh oh oh

There's no such thing as too much: *many*

- a. Chocolate.
- b. Mascara.
- c. Partying.
- d. Music.
- e. Other: eyelashes!!!

The person whose opinion matters most to me is My own

Writing songs about ex-boyfriends:

- a. Is cathartic.
- b. Ends up biting me in the ass.
- c. Is a great source for material.
- d. Is something I won't do again.
- e. Other: It's something I always say I won't do again... but do

My secret celeb crush is Usher

Secretly - Colin Firth



Amy Winehouse came out with her first album. It was amazing. It's my favorite," she remembers.

After graduating, she planned on heading to college and thought she'd eventually work for a record label, discovering new talent. It's not that she had abandoned her dreams of becoming a singer; she just figured the odds were that she wouldn't hit it big.

But as Adele was prepping for her final exams and planning her 18th-birthday celebration, she heard from a record label that wanted to meet with her. "A friend of mine had set up a Myspace page with some of my songs on it," she says, tucking a long strand of ginger hair behind her ear.

"So this guy e-mailed me on there and said he worked at a label and wanted to meet with me. I thought it was just some perv on the internet, so I e-mailed back and said 'Leave me alone, I'm organizing my birthday party.' He asked if I was signed, and I told him no and that he could e-mail me in a few weeks when I was finished with school."

That nobody wound up working for XL Recordings, a label that also represents Radiohead and M.I.A. But Adele had no idea about that when she agreed to meet with him. "I Googled the guy's name as I was leaving to meet with him and saw who he represented. I nearly shit myself," she says. "We met; they liked me and signed me. I feel bad telling that story because it was really that easy."

So instead of going away to university, Adele started writing music for her first album. "I had some songs already written, like 'Hometown Glory,' which I wrote when I was 16 about the thought of going away to university and leaving London and being sad," she says. "I've always liked writing songs. But when I suddenly had to, I was dry and couldn't come up with

anything. I was very nervous because I thought the label would say I wasn't ready." Then Adele met a guy.

Falling Fast and Hard

"It was my first relationship. He cheated on me, and I was gutted," she says, pounding a fist over her heart. "I was a teenager, and it was a flimsy relationship, you know? But suddenly, I had something to write about." The album, *19* (the age she was when she wrote it), came out in January 2008.

Before long, the single "Chasing Pavements" was being played frequently on the radio, and stars like Beyoncé were gushing about how they loved her. She got so much buzz from that first album that she was nomi-

"It was my first relationship. He cheated on me, and I was gutted."

nated for Best New Artist at the Grammys...and won. After that, she went back to London and asked for six months off. During this time, she met her next boyfriend. "It was a more severe relationship than the one before," she says. "And things went tragic between us, and we broke up. I'm fine without him, but I don't want to be without him and I still miss him."

The day after splitting, she walked into a recording studio and wrote "Rolling in the Deep." "We had a massive argument the night before. He was dissing me, saying things like my life would be shit without him. And he called me needy, and I flipped. I've never been needy," she says, getting a little heated. "The next day, I went to Paul Epworth's studio. I was still livid, and I sang the first verse of that song. By the end of the day, we'd finished. That was my 'Bitch!' moment."

Epworth, an award-winning music producer, remembers the day. "She

(Firth) Kevin Mazur/WireImage. (Cupcake) Rob Shaw/acpsyndication.com.



We're pretty sure she won't have trouble finding love again.

“It’s so hard for me to share my feelings. I’ve actually never told a guy that I loved him.”

says. “I wound up writing letters to all the men I’ve been with, telling them that I did feel that for them. Well, except for one guy who I wrote and was like, ‘You’re a fucking cunt.’”

So is she ready to move on and find a new man to whom she will reveal how she feels? “For now, it’s just me and Louie,” she says, referring to her dachshund. “I’m fed up with the lot of them.”

Part of that may be because she hasn’t quite gotten over her last love. “It’s bittersweet because I wouldn’t give up this success for anything. But at the same time, I’d do anything to be with him,” she says. “I miss him. I do. And it’s hard singing all these songs because it makes me remember how brilliant we were when we were good...and how tragic it was when we were bad.”

She may not be ready to date quite yet, but she knows what she wants in a relationship. “First, I need someone who will make me laugh,” she says. “And next time, I won’t be quite as giving with my time. Before, I’d always leave somewhere early to get back to him or cancel my plans so I’d be home when he got home. That’s not healthy, and I won’t let it happen again.”

The past aside, Adele remains hopeful about her relationship future. “I’d like to get married one day. But he’d have to sign a prenup,” she says with a cackle. “Can you imagine?!”

Standing up to leave, she tells us she’s off to a meeting with her manager. But before she reaches the door, a thought strikes her. “God! If I find that happiness, what will I write about?” she wonders aloud jokingly. “No, no. I really want my next album to be happy and fun.” ■

gave it 150 percent,” he says. “She started singing, and I thought, *Holy shit*. You could tell it was a huge release for her.”

With that, Adele officially started on her second album, *21*. She wrote and recorded other songs about the breakup, like “Set Fire to the Rain” and “Turning Tables.” But no song is quite as breathtaking as her ballad “Someone Like You,” where she reveals that the guy has moved on and is with someone else. “Even now, I get emotional performing that,” she says. “It was very scary because it was such an honest thing for me to write. I don’t think I’ll ever write a better song than that. I think that’ll be my song, you know?”

Healing Her Heartbreak

As open as Adele is in her songs, she admits it’s not always easy for her in more personal situations. She can pour her heart out to stadiums full of strangers, but ask her to do it with someone she is head over heels for and she’ll clam up. “It’s so hard for me to share my feelings,” she says. “I’ve actually never told a guy that I loved him.”

That’s right, the woman who has made her career on crooning about lost love hasn’t uttered the words herself. “I’ve felt them; I just can’t say them. My friend recently convinced me how important it is for guys to know that,” she

Coat: Lee Klabin; ring: Diane Kordas Jewelry. With thanks to Spring Studios.