

Rihanna likes to be in control.

So much so that her management has given her an easy way to cut our interview short: Our chat is to take place in an SUV on the way from the Glamour shoot to her apartment, a short drive away. But she keeps talking-candidly and often hilariously, and instead of stopping at her front door, she has her driver circle the block again and again, and we talk more. What comes through more than anything is a tale of transformation: In February 2009, Rihanna endured the abuse of Chris Brown and the subsequent gossip frenzy. It was painful, she tells me, to lose control of her story and image that way; determined not to let that happen again, she has since reemerged as the architect of her own fascinating comeback. On her selfrevealing albums Rated R and Loud, on Twitter (and, as of mid-July, the most pourular female star on Facebook), in drama fashion choices and in interviews like one, Rihanna has reinvented hersel becoming more, well, herself. "My wh life changed a couple years ago. T when I decided to let my guard down conpletely," she says, sipping a Corona as city scrolls by her tinted window. "Theres freedom in honesty. If you just face it today, tomorrow you can move on to something else." Here's Rihanna, very honestly. GLAMOUR: I wanted to show you this list: total number-one hits. You've had 10, and you're the youngest artist to ever hit that mark--you topped Mariah Carey. Plus, you did it faster than any solo artist in Billboard's history: less than five years to 10 number ones.

RIHANNA: That's kind of amazing. Damn. I've never actually seen this list laid out like this. It's kind of mind-blowing. I try to just be very, very appreciative.

GLAMOUR: Can you top the Beatles?

RIHANNA: I'm heading there. If I fall short, I'm still in good company.

GLAMOUR: Your style has gotten more aggressive as your music has. Do you think of the two together in that way?

RIHANNA: Absolutely, and I don't think of one without the other. My music definitely determines the direction we're gonna move in. It's like music, fashion, hair, makeup.

GLAMOUR: There are so many pop stars who blow up and then lose control. With you, from the moment you chopped your hair off, you were saying, "No, I'm in control of what I'm doing."

RIHANNA: In the beginning of my career, it was really strict for me. I couldn't wear pink or red lipstick; it was just bizarre. We had a young fan base, and they were trying to keep me fresh. But I just really wanted to be myself. I wanted to be sassy, the attitude, all these things that I am.

GLAMOUR: Your sound keeps evolving too, and your lyrics keep getting more complicated and raw.

RIHANNA: It was important for me to grow. Good Girl Gone Bad was the first time I really took the reins in my career creatively. Then Rated R came right after that, and that's when I realized, OK, my fans love the music; now I need to get a little deep with them, get a little more vulnerable, open up.

GLAMOUR: That shift to more personal songs happened after everything with Chris Brown, and around the same time, you went on Twitter and developed a different connection with your fans.

RIHANNA: Definitely. That's why I started Twitter. I was like, "Twitter is so dumb—why would I want anybody to know anything more about me?" But it was easy for my fans to believe everything else they were hearing about me—sites, blogs, rumors—because they weren't really hear-

ing much from me. Now they don't believe rumors anymore, because they know me.

GLAMOUR: When you followed Chris Brown on Twitter, everyone freaked out and you jumped in with: "it's...twitter, not the altar!" What was that about?

RIHANNA: That's something people would love to make into more than it actually is, and I think that's just something I'm gonna have to live with for the rest of my life, unfortunately.

GLAMOUR: There's a lyric from "Rated R" that I love: "While you're getting your cry on, I'm getting my fly on." That struck me as the ultimate retail-therapy lyric.

RIHANNA: You're right. It's retail therapy for sure, but it's also a very mean line, very cocky, very arrogant. It's a character I play.

GLAMOUR: It seems like when guys play characters—like Eminem in your controversial song together, "Love the Way You Lie," about an abusive couple—nobody thinks that's the real Eminem. But it does seem like when you do a song like that, everybody thinks that's the real Rihanna.

RIHANNA: Absolutely, and I'm very careful about the lyrics that I sing now because of

about the lyrics that I sing now because of that. Rated R was the album that became really real, very honest. After that, it's hard to go back to doing songs that are fiction. There was no coming back.

GLAMOUR: I've heard you say that the dramatic lyrics of "S&M," your megahit, are both metaphorical and literal.

RIHANNA: Yeah! I had no idea how close "S&M" was to me until maybe five months ago. When I was singing it, it was a fun song, and I directed it at my love-hate relationship with the media, but it went so much further than that, and I didn't even realize it. Then I started putting pieces of the puzzle together, seeing how it related to my childhood and how it can affect me in my adult life. Continued on page 329

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GLAMOUR: You're talking of your father? [Ronald Fenty reportedly had substance-abuse problems and had left Rihanna's home by the time she was a teenager.]

RIHANNA: For that song, definitely. I would say my relationship with my father has had a bigger impact on me than I knew. Even with the things that I love, the things that I am attracted to. A lot of it stems from the things that I've seen in my life as a child.

GLAMOUR: Does that mean you naturally look for trouble? You're drawn to drama? RIHANNA: Yes and no. I hate drama. But at the same time, nothing bothers me more than when life's perfect. And that's the sick part. I just love a challenge, whether it's a relationship, my career, clothing.... Like, getting dressed, I want to pick the most bizarre pair of shorts so I can figure out how to make it look right, or work an outfit that will make people go, "What the hell is she wearing?" You know, whatever it is, a challenge is just thrilling for me.

GLAMOUR: You've said that as a girl, when you had tough stuff going on with your family, you would sing along to Destiny's Child and Mariah albums. What else?

RIHANNA: Celine Dion, Whitney Houston.

Rihanna Answers Your Q's!



Like us on Facebook to watch Rihanna answer your biggest questions! To view, scan tag, or snap a photo and text to 77865. See page 84 for details. reminds me of 8 Mile, when Eminem rapped every disthey could say about him. It gives you that freedom, because, what are they going to say about you now?

GLAMOUR: In the "S&M" video, there are hateful words coming across the screen.

RIHANNA: That was me making fun of absurd things I've heard and read about myself.

GLAMOUR: One of those words is *slut*. That seems like some-

thing teenage girls can identify with—how if a woman has sex, and it gets gossiped about, she's suddenly a slut.

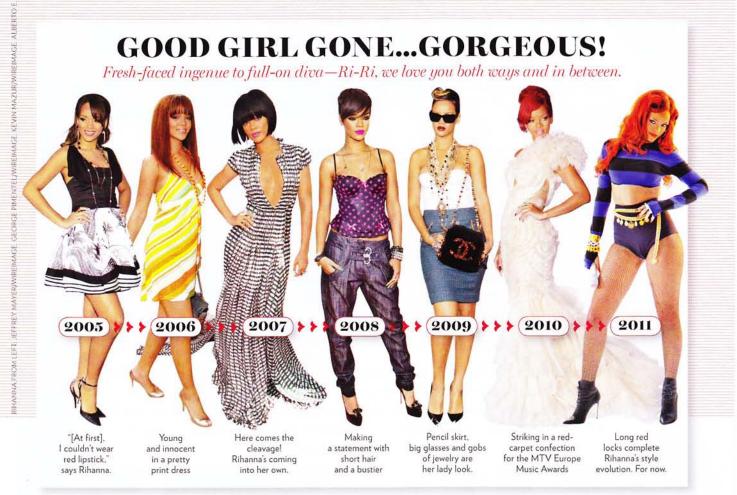
RIHANNA: I wouldn't want to promote teenage girls having sex. But the reality is, it's happening, and they're just a little too young to understand how careful they need to be. That's a big battle with me, because I'm 23, and a lot of my fans are eight years younger than I am, so there's a bit of a tugof-war there. I want to set the right example and, at the same time, live my life. So I kind of let go of that and was just really honest. I feel Continued on page 401

GLAMOUR: Now all these impressionable young girls are singing your songs. Which do you hope they're singing?
RIHANNA: "Fire Bomb" is one of my favorite songs. It kills me that it was never a single. It's not the most positive message; it's just honest. It's about wanting revenge, because you just feel like no one can understand what you're feeling unless you burn them the way they burned you. And that was at a time when I didn't really

want to be angry but I couldn't help it, and "Fire Bomb" [released in 2009] was like that therapeutic song for me.

GLAMOUR: In the last two albums, you're open about how messy life gets.

RIHANNA: I think honesty is the ultimate liberation in life. People want to shy away from the truth and keep sweeping it under the rug. But after a while, you pick up the rug and there's just way too much dirt, so you might as well just be up front about it. If you just face it today, then tomorrow you can move on to something else. It just



Rihanna continued from page 329

like pop stars can't be rock stars anymore because they have to be role models, and it takes the fun out of it for us, because we just want to have fun with art.

GLAMOUR: The head of XL Recordings, Richard Russell, who is also Adele's boss, called music videos like "S&M" "faux porn." RIHANNA: [Laughs.] Faux porn? Has he ever seen porn? If he feels like that, thanks. I mean, s--t, I'll take that as a compliment. It was just a smooch on the cheek, but if he got a boner? Then, you're welcome.

GLAMOUR: Ha! Let's break your song "S&M" down. "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but whips and chains excite me." RIHANNA: I'm just making fun of blogs and rumors. It used to really bother me. Now it's like, "They called me a whore on that site yesterday, and today they're calling me an idiot—not so bad!" It's not acceptable, but there's nothing you can do about it.

GLAMOUR: OK, that's the metaphor. On the other level, you're straight-up talking about sex. What's the literal meaning? Do you like dominant guys?

RIHANNA: I absolutely do prefer a dominant guy. I play a very dominant role in my life, in every other aspect of it. And I like to feel like a lady still, at some point. I feel like that's the time when a guy really gets to be a man, and I get to be a woman. And if I'm being a man in the bedroom too, there's nothing really in it for me.

GLAMOUR: As a role model, is that hard to say? RIHANNA: Yeah, it is, but here I am speaking as a 23-year-old, saying that I engage in adult behavior. I'm not talking to the fiveyear-old who listens to "What's My Name?" GLAMOUR: In your 2009 interview with Glamour, you said you didn't realize how much your decisions might affect your fans. RIHANNA: It was definitely a big wake-up call, to realize the impact I have on young women. It also made me feel a lot closer to them. We live different lives, but we have a lot of the same life experiences. They trust the things that I say because it's coming from a peer, as opposed to a parent. And you have to put on your role model hat.... They know you're just as rebellious as they are, so if you say something is wrong, it's wrong for sure.

GLAMOUR: I was trying to understand the difference between Gaga's Little Monsters and the Rihanna Navy—the names you gave your fan base. She calls herself the Mother Monster. I can't ever see you saying you're the mother figure.

RIHANNA: No, because I don't look at them as followers under myself. We're peers. They're right here with me. I need them more than they need me. I need their feedback, I need their honesty, and I need their support. Without that, it's pointless. I respect them very, very much.

GLAMOUR: I interviewed actor Taylor Kitsch, and he said you were so badass in *Battleship* [her film, set to open next spring], doing your own stunts, "annihilating everything in her way."

RIHANNA: That does make me sound badass. Taylor is great. I didn't know anything about acting; I was just going in there, fingers crossed. And [director] Peter Berg is awesome. He's a psycho, which works for me. I get along well with psychos. I want to do more films, for sure.

GLAMOUR: Let's talk about your competition. There's a tight pack, right?

RIHANNA: There's a pack. It's me, Gaga, Katy Perry, Beyoncé...who else? Ke\$ha, for sure. Women are definitely dominating music right now, and that's because we are competitive beings. I feel like music hasn't been this exciting in a while.

GLAMOUR: You and Katy Perry are friends,

right? You threw her bachelorette party when she married Russell Brand. And you're competing. Are you "frenemies"? RIHANNA: No. [Laughs.] Katy is, like, the s--t. Honestly, I really love that girl. And when I met her, it was at a time when I wasn't really talking to any females besides

the women I work with and my best friend.

I've always been like that, my whole teen-

age life, till now.

GLAMOUR: Your friends are mostly men?
RIHANNA: All my friends are guys, to be completely honest. But when I met her, it was such a breath of fresh air. I just couldn't believe this chick had no edit button. She was everything I wanted to be at that time, because I was still at a point in my career where I had to edit myself and not be too open. My whole life changed a couple years ago. And that's when I let my guard down completely.... But Katy and Lady Gaga came out of the gate exactly the way they think, the way they wanna dress, the way they wanna speak.

GLAMOUR: You're competitive with them, but there's respect in the game.

RIHANNA: Absolutely. I would only look at them as competition if I really admire them. These women are *real* competition.

Logan Hill is a writer and New York magazine contributing editor.





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