

FKA twigs: The 'It Girl' of the moment tries to move beyond Robert Pattinson and 'the penis dress'

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Robert Pattinson and FKA twigs, wearing the infamous "penis dress" arrive at "China: Through The Looking Glass" Costume Institute Benefit Gala at the Metropolitan Museum of Art on May 4, 2015 in New York.



TALK

V MAGAZINE

FKA twigs topless on the cover of V magazine.

ABOUT making an entrance.

The British singer known as [FKA twigs](#) showed up at the recent Met Gala on the arm of actor [Robert Pattinson](#), wearing a dress with a penis painted on. In that moment, the woman whose real name is Tahliah Barnett found that "her popularity immediately went from zero to 60," says style expert [Joe Zee](#).

"It was a real moment for her," agrees designer Phillip Bloch. "On a certain level, it

made her.”

Yet, on another level, such a high-profile arrival may have undermined FKA twigs, who's set to play several big New York shows at the 2,000-capacity Brooklyn Warehouse starting Sunday.

True, the mainstream media may have suddenly discovered the singer in that moment - especially because she also sported a new engagement ring from Pattinson at the event.. But such gossipy coverage has threatened to overwhelm the real artistry of the budding star.

Less than one year ago, the 26-year-old was known only by the edgy set. They were drawn to her 2014 album, “LP1,” which matched avant-garde beats to both the singer’s spooky vocals and haunting melodies. In the U.K., FKA twigs’ album earned nominations for the tony Mercury and Brit Awards. In the U.S., “LP1” landed near the top of a Village Voice poll of American critics.

twigs’ upcoming shows are part of the uber-cool Red Bull Academy Festival New York.. After the Met blowout, promoters had to add a third date in the run, which lasts through Tuesday.

These ill be anything but routine concerts. Titled “Congrata” (for “coming together”), the multi-media events feature experimental choreography from a 10-member dance troupe, laser-generated cages, strobe lights and leather costumes created by a designer from Alexander McQueen.

“Here is an artist who has been very conscious of the way her vision comes to life,” says Red Bull Academy cofounder Many Ameri. “Music is at the heart of it. But she has used a lot of different elements to show how she thinks music should be represented.”

Choreography is in her genes. Her mother was a dancer and gymnast. Her Jamaican-born dad was a jazz dancer, though twigs wasn’t reared by him. She was raised by her mother and a stepfather in a low-income area of Gloucestershire, England.

By 17, she moved to London to start a career in dance. She quickly found work in music videos by Ed Sheeran and Jesse J. twigs earned her stage name because of her tendency to crack her joints in public. She had to add the FKA initials (for “formerly known as”) because another performer already used the Twigs name.

Though she loved choreography, FKA twigs hated the conformist nature of most music videos. She also longed to make her own music. By 2012, she released “EP1,” creating her own videos for the songs as well. Her lyrics fostered an uncommon sense of isolation while the music suggested an updated take on the '90s trip-hop of Massive

Attack and Tricky. By posting the songs on YouTube, twigs caught the attention of the fashion set. Soon she landed on the covers of cool mags like i-D magazine and Fader.

“I didn’t have money. I didn’t have a career,” she told Rolling Stone. But “magazines were ringing me up. ‘Front cover! Do this! Wear Jean-Paul Gaultier! But then I’m going home and saying ‘I don’t think I can eat next week.’”

She emerged as a fashion magnet.

“There’s something beautiful about her,” Zee says. “She can push fashion to the edge without becoming Bjork. She’s that cool girl, but she’s not incompressible.”

Bloch thinks she has a natural sense of style. “Her dress at the Met Gala (designed by [Christopher Kane](#)) is who she is,” he says. “It comes from deep inside. It’s not a team putting it together.”

At the same time, twiggs’ romantic involvement with Pattinson has drawn jealousy and scorn. “There’s a whole group of die-hard ‘Twilight’ fans out there who are probably like ‘I want him to be with Bella!’” Zee says.

Some of the attacks have been racist, causing twigs to disengage from social media.

Still, Ameri believes FKA twigs’ art will wrestle back the headlines in the end.

“She’s certainly aware of what’s happening around her,” he says. “But whatever platform she’s given, she’s able to stand on that stage and fill it.”

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