



-text and interview by Rachel Khona

I first discovered Rye Rye, aka Ryeisha Berrain, by way of M.I.A. and instantly became a fan. She spits rhymes with a confidence that belies her young age, making one think that she could kick your ass and steal your man at the same time. This is badass, girl-power, let's-go-out-and-show-'em-how-it's-done music. She talks of love, life, boys, dancing, sex, and of course clubbing. "When I hear the beat for real, I just go with it," she tells me. "Mainly I just put the beat on repeat, and I do whatever comes to my head."

Photography: Aaron Richter, Fashion: Fernando Lahoz, Fashion Assistant: Jameson Laurentino, Hair: Steven Thomas, Makeup: Lucky for MAC Cosmetics @ Artists by Next. Shot @ Go Studios NYC. Special thanks to Michael Boles and Lisa DiAngelo.

A mashup of hip hop, house, electronic grooves, and a dollop of attitude lend Rye Rye's music a frenetic energy that will make you feel like you drank four cans of Red Bull - in a good way. In spite of her boastful lyrics, Rye Rye was anything but gangsta on the phone. Peppering her sentences with "like" and "cool," she was more like the popular girl whose table you wanted to sit at during lunch.

A regular on the Baltimore club scene, Rye Rye has been making music since she was 16. Some little girls dream of growing up and marrying Prince Charming; Rye Rye dreamed of making music. It all started one day when Rye Rye found herself bored stiff. When most people are bored, they eat, drink, or watch a movie. However, Rye Rye is not most people. Rather than resorting to a pint of Ben & Jerry's, she decided to start writing music. Ever funky and outgoing, she later called up DJ Blagstarr, a friend of her sister and fellow Baltimorean, and left him a message in which she rapped a verse.

Impressed, he collaborated with her on the song "Shake It to the Ground," which quickly became a club hit. One thing led to another, and soon the high school junior was meeting with Diplo and M.I.A., who had heard the single and loved it. Rye Rye was quickly signed as the first artist to N.E.E.T., M.I.A.'s label (and imprint of Interscope), and began working on her debut album *Go! Pop! Bang!*

At first she thought it was creepy that M.I.A. had been looking for her, but they soon became close. "When I first started working with her, it was real cool; she was like a mother, sister, a best friend, you know? It wasn't pressure. When we was in the studio, it was always fun. It was just her doing her part and letting me be free to do my part and do whatever I feel."

Although M.I.A. makes an appearance on the album, Rye Rye makes it clear that her debut album is about her. "I write my own songs. On some songs I might get a little bit of help, but I'm used to writing my own music. When other people try to write a song for me, I feel awkward. I might have a few ideas from writers sometimes, but mainly it's me."



Dress **GEOFFREY MAC**, necklace **COACH**, earrings Rye Rye's own, shoes **VIVIENNE WESTWOOD FOR MELISSA**.



Dress GEOFFREY MAC, jacket and earrings Rye Rye's own.

She hadn't even finished high school when she began touring with M.I.A.; she managed to successfully avoid any Britney/Lindsay meltdowns, even after she became unexpectedly pregnant. "It wasn't that hectic for me because I was able to maintain everything and deal with it. It was a little hectic, like when I had my baby and stuff, but I still was recording."

Go! Pop! Bang! was originally set to come out March 2009, but the pregnancy, combined with a series of other delays, caused the release to be postponed. Now that the dust has settled, she is finally ready to drop Go! Pop! Bang!, a sunny collection of songs so danceable that they could get your 80-year-old grandpa on the dance floor.

Of course, when you're that cool, you're likely to attract attention. Her catchy beats and flamboyant look attracted another famous fan, designer Prabal Gurung. He called her up for a little video collaboration featuring his debut resort collection. "We had mutual friends, and they reached out to me to do a collaboration: mix fashion and music. I had just recorded this song, 'New Thing,' and I knew that would be cool."

Like Axl Rose and Stephanie Seymour, it was a match made in fashion-music heaven. "When I'm out of town or doing shows, I really like to dress crazy - it's like a mood thing. I just go for anything that's vibrant. I think of stuff that will compliment my music. I like to wear bright stuff that I know is going to pop on stage."

Her predilection for all things bright and colorful made Gurung's neon pink, lime, yellow and black floral collection a perfect fit for Rye Rye. The video for the aptly titled single "New Thing" features Rye Rye and her blonde-wigged backup dancers sporting the collection while energetically dancing.

Not content with just wow-ing fashionistas, Rye Rye has also dipped her toe in the acting waters as Daisy in the film adaptation of "13 Jump Street." And yes, ladies, Johnny Depp will be making an appearance. "Acting" was a lot more work. All the calls so early in the morning. But it was cool though. It was cool."

