

HELLO! EXCLUSIVE

WHAT'S NEW, PUSSYCAT?

NICOLE SCHERZINGER BRINGS THE X-FACTOR TO DUBAI

'The thing I love more than anything is singing. I feel like that's what I'm really gifted at'

She is a chameleon. Happy to chat about her love of food and enchanted by the fairytale gowns we have for her to try, yet intensely focused during our interview and fierce the moment the lens is on her, as her favourite soundtracks (Ed Sheeran and The Weeknd on our shoot day) get her in the mood.

Nicole Scherzinger freely admits that she is full of contradictions, coming across as feisty yet guarded – as one would living in a celebrity whirl – and that people “don’t know my sense of humour, that I am goofy and have a silly side...and I am quite down-to-earth.”

In person, the 39-year-old is delicate, soft-spoken and comes across as quite shy, which also seems at odds with the on-screen and on-stage persona she has cultivated since she

stole the spotlight on the world stage with multi-platinum-award-winning burlesque girl band The Pussycat Dolls.

Since then, the multi-faceted Honolulu-born *Don't Cha* hit-maker has proved herself to be a bona fide performance star, conquering the silver screen in a *Dirty Dancing* remake, shimmering on the theatrical stage, winning *Dancing with the Stars* and mentoring on *The X-Factor*.

During a recent trip to Dubai for Harper's Bazaar Best Dressed, the L.A.-based diva sat down in the suitably salubrious surroundings of The St. Regis Dubai's Presidential Suite to give **HELLO!** an exclusive interview about girl crushes, making musicals and building her brand. ▶

Lilac gown, AED27,500/
US\$ 7,487, *Maison Yeya*
Sandals, AED4,650/US\$
1,266, *Giuseppe Zanotti*
Earrings, *Stylist's own*

'I haven't had the chance to do Broadway like I have always wanted. I would love to go back to the theatre'



Lilac top,
AED2,150/US\$585,
Madiyah Al Sharqi
Trousers,
AED2,720/US\$741,
Madiyah Al Sharqi
Sandals,
AED3,250/US\$885,
Giuseppe Zanotti
Earrings,
AED4,560/US\$ 1,241,
Donna Hourani
Right inset: Nicole wears Maison Yeya to Harper's Bazaar Best Dressed

You seem to excel at everything you put your mind to – but do you have a favourite when it comes to singing, dancing or judging?
The thing that I love more than anything is singing. I feel like that's what I am really gifted at. I feel like I have purpose when I sing and that's how I communicate and connect with people best. I can express my voice, my heart and my soul through that.

Your collaborators have been so varied...
I have sung with everyone from Andrea Bocelli to Slash, Snoop Dogg, 50 Cent. I love to sing all different styles. But whether I am doing world tours or performing at the Hollywood Bowl or on TV, for me there is nothing quite like the magic of the stage.

You got an Olivier nod for your turn in *Cats*.
I come from the theatre; I love that honest connection with the audience. It is very demanding as it's up to eight shows a week and takes up a lot of time. I was really fortunate as I worked on it for a few months; usually it is six months to a year.

I haven't had the chance to do Broadway like I have always wanted; when the opportunity does present itself I would love to go back to the theatre. Recently I did a movie musical, a remake of *Dirty Dancing*. I enjoyed that as well. It was a bug I caught. I thought, 'Wow, you capture the magic one time and can share it forever as opposed to always dying every night on the stage.'

Are movie musicals the way forward for you? They seem a perfect fit and there seems such a huge resurgence with *La La Land*...
And *The Greatest Showman*. For sure. More movies, more theatre and I would also like to do a world tour – that's a dream as well.

'I am very proud of the Pussycat Dolls' albums and I worked really hard on them'



Pretty much anything that has to do with performance – film, on stage or in concert.

We first heard about you in this region when you broke out with the Pussycat Dolls. Do you credit that with propelling you to the top?
Absolutely. There is no doubt that the Pussycat Dolls is one of the most well-known girl bands ever so I am extremely grateful for that worldwide, global success. I am very proud of those albums and I worked really hard on them.

You have previously said that your heritage also helps you blend in everywhere...
I have my ancestors to thank as I am such a diverse mix that no matter where I go, whether it is in the Middle East or elsewhere, people claim me as their own. So I can relate to pretty much anyone due to the colour of my skin and the way that I look. I think that's had a huge impact as well.

Any highlights from your trip to Dubai?
Oh yes! I did a spectacular desert safari that was arranged by Nara Escape. We were served exquisite food at our private camp – the set up was like a fairy tale, as



'Whitney Houston is my biggest inspiration. Her voice ignited something in me from a young age'



Top, AED2,200/
US\$599, Ayesha Depala
Skirt, AED2,738/
US\$745, SemSem
Necklace, Stylist's own

'I think I am the most successful judge on The X-Factor'

it seemed right out of *One Thousand and One Nights*. It was so peaceful and serene, just being surrounded by perfect sand dunes. We also went on camel rides and quad biking....

Having been a judge on *The X-Factor*, whose criticism do you rate the most?

When it comes to singing and performing I don't listen to many people as it is innate and comes from my soul. I pretty much overthink everything in life but I don't overthink when I am on stage. I don't have to question or ask too many people in that respect. I think everyone's opinion counts when you are looking for it. But, sometimes you don't have to look and everyone offers it.

Who would be alongside you on your dream judging panel?

Well, you know I love Louis [Walsh] and Sharon [Osbourne]. But it would be fun to do anything with Will Farrell. I am bonkers about him. I think I would have Louis, Sharon – and Will would play Simon!

Do you think that having a performance background and being an artist yourself gives you an edge over other judges?

When Simon speaks, he does so from an executive point of view and he has his knack for finding talent. The same goes for Louis and Sharon. I think it's extremely helpful to be an artist. I can be an artist ambassador. I can be a voice for them. I don't need to say, 'I wonder how you are feeling', because I know exactly how they are feeling.

I think my experience and expertise gives me an edge. As a performer I have done so many things and had such a diverse career; there isn't a realm musically that I haven't dabbled in so I have an arsenal of experience and tools to draw on to mentor my contestants. Creatively, I help them in every way. I think I am the most successful judge on the show.

You are here for Harper's Bazaar Best Dressed – who would you vote as Best Dressed on the international red carpet?

I love J Lo on the red carpet. We all have a girl crush on her.

Which designers are your go-tos?

I just discovered this new designer here – Maison Yeya – that I am in awe of. I am very close with Julien Macdonald and Michael Costello, too.

Which artists made an impression on you during your career?

Whitney Houston. She is my biggest inspiration. Her voice really ignited something in me from a young age. Those that I admire today include Sia... what's so special about her is that she was a writer first. She did the theme song for *Lion* and I had the honour of performing that. Emily Sandé is very talented, Beyoncé is fierce, and I love Ed Sheeran.

What's the biggest misconception that people have about you?

They don't know my voice. They don't know I am a singer first.

How do you manage to keep the public ▶

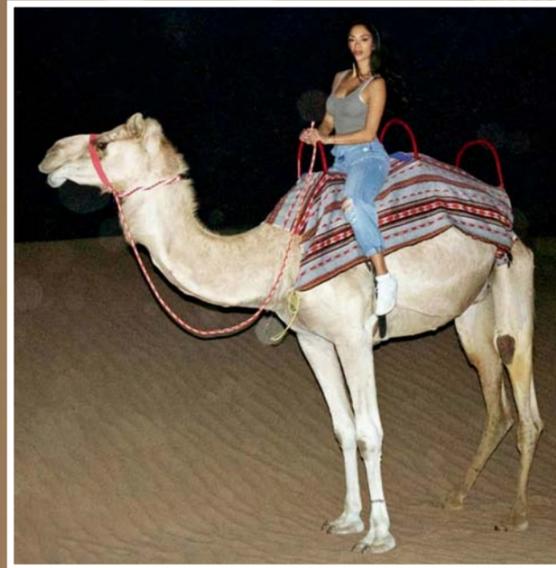


Corset,
AED905/US\$246,
Madiyah Al Sharqi
Trousers,
AED1,770/US\$482,
Madiyah Al Sharqi
Necklace,
Stylist's own
Bracelets,
Nicole's own

'I am really rubbish at social media. I'd like to be more transparent'



Lace top, AED2,393/US\$651, Madiyah Al Sharqi
Trousers, AED2,719/US\$741, Madiyah Al Sharqi
Choker, AED1,500/US\$408, Donna Hourani



and the private separate?

I am really rubbish at social media. I have probably taken 50,000 pictures since I have been here and posted one. I am very reserved. I would like to be more transparent but I am not.

Do you work out a lot?

I actually should be a lot bigger but I train hard and eat like a footballer. All I do is eat!

Has anyone ever made you star-struck?

When I met Whitney Houston obviously – I was performing with the Pussycat Dolls for a Christian Dior show, singing *Feeling Good* and I got to meet her after. I was beside myself.

A lot of personalities become a brand...

Absolutely. That is partly why I am here. I have a perfume called Chosen and I want everyone to hear about it. I want every woman to feel chosen and special. I want to expand that in every form... through fashion, clothing. I am a very creative person so love all that.

Is there someone that feeds your soul?

Home. Hawaii. On the islands with my family – that brings peace.

INTERVIEW & CREATIVE DIRECTION:

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STYLIST: LUCY WILDMAN
PHOTOS: RICHARD HALL

HAIR & MAKE-UP: BLOWOUT&GO
SHOT ON LOCATION AT ST.REGIS AL HABTOOR CITY, DUBAI

ADDITIONAL PHOTOS: AASIVA JAGADEESH, NICOLE SCHERZINGER



Gown, AED8,025/US\$2,135, Bazza Al Zouman
Jewellery, Stylist's own.
Nicole's Nara Escape desert adventure was followed by fans on social media (inset)