



SUNGLASSES Topshop
T-SHIRT Prada
PANTS Prada
TRAINERS Nike

SON OF

PHOTOGRAPHY Ollie Adegboye
TEXT Nina Bhadreshwar
FASHION Bridi Foden

How anyone defines Snoh Aalegra probably tells you more about their reference points than the singer herself. Multi-faceted, elemental and as intangibly familiar as snow itself, the Persian-Swedish siren is simultaneously elusive. A hybrid of conundrum and phenomenon bound by her potential and down-to-earth attitude.

Yeah - I get it. She is so like Amy Winehouse, the soul, she can belt it out like Adele, Shirley Bassey, smoky as Sade, intense as Nina, innocent as Selena... Snoh rolls her eyes.

"Yeah, the Amy comparisons... I mean, I love Amy. She is without doubt a legend but she was also a trained jazz singer. I'm not. My influence is soul. However, I found out her birthday was on 14th September and mine is on 13th September, so there is something eerie about that."

This, I am about to discover, is typical Snoh thinking: finding connections in the less obvious places. On listening to her debut album, FEELS, it is obvious this woman is an

what I should do.

"My parents were both Iranian. They had moved to Sweden after the regime switched in Iran, two or three years before I was born. When I was seven, we moved to a small town, Enköping, with a population of around 30,000. There wasn't a lot to do there so after school, I'd spend two or three hours in front of the mirror doing my own shows to Lauryn Hill, Whitney and Brandy. I mean, I was seriously doing a show. When my girlfriends came round, we'd lip sync to the Spice Girls. They'd always make me be Posh Spice. I was like, 'No! I want to be Mel B! Victoria doesn't really do that much.'"

Clearly these were strongly formative years, as Snoh continues to reflect on her childhood: "I went through a lot of bullying from third grade. There was always something wrong with me: too skinny, too dark. The racism was intense. In Sweden, there's a few words which would be the equivalent of the N-word: svartsalle and blaate. Blaate means im-

"When I feel love, I love very hard. When I'm with that person, I am at home."

Amazonian presence, an athletic vital voice, tall, slim and muscular. Sat beside her in North London's Tileyard Studios, hunched over my notepad, I feel like an ant.

Yet although her style is as cold as her name, the 28 year old Aalegra is warm and effusive in personality, as fun-loving and goofy as she is suave and polished. She is, by her own confession, a "production nerd."

"I was always connecting to distinct sounds or phrases as a kid. In school I remember I started singing when I was seven years old. I wrote my first song when I was nine. Grammatically, it didn't make sense, but that didn't matter to me. I felt the calling with music, it just touched me in a very abnormal way. Any opportunity to sing or perform, I'd always be up there doing stuff. I remember parents coming up to me: 'You know there's something about you when you sing, you made me feel something.' I was very young but those sort of comments, I took it as a sign from God that this was

migrant, but svartsalle is even more offensive. You know, there'd be comments like: 'Go back to where you're from' which really used to confuse me, because where I'm from is Sweden."

She looks out of the window as our conversation moves on to talk about living in L.A. She sighs. "Yeah, L.A. is great but it's so... fake! I don't know if I can call it home," she giggles. "I guess it's always been a battle to never know where I'm from. Where's home? That's why I make soul music, it's a way to go through all that authenticity. When I feel love, I love very hard. When I'm with that person, I am at home." This is indeed a theme that keeps coming up, in both her music and conversation. It is obviously a genuine search.

I mention the attention that the compositional quality of her songs has started to receive. She nods, while recalling that "At first, I just made up love songs. I mean, what did I know? I was just 14 when I was signed by Sony ATV in Swe-



SUNGLASSES Linda Farrow
T SHIRT + TROUSERS Aries Arise



SUNGLASSES Dries Van Noten at Linda Farrow
JACKET Topshop Boutique
BOOTS Balenciaga



SUNGLASSES Topshop
T SHIRT Prada
TROUSERS Filles A Papa
TRAINERS Nike



SUNGLASSES Alessandra Rich at Linda Farrow
JACKET + VEST Filles A Papa
TROUSERS Aries Arise



MAKE UP: Minnie Sanfrit / USING D'Adda
HAIR: James Catalano / USING Fudge Professional

EARRINGS: REENE SJ YU
SHIRT: Helmut Lang
TROUSERS: Ashley Williams

den, and all I was trying to do was to make music. The lyrics didn't mean anything to me personally. Then I started living life and writing about my life experiences. For me, my songs have become a memory book. They are a way for me to give a memory life forever, like with 'Charleville 9200'. That's actually a road in Los Angeles. I was out with someone and I wrote the lyrics when I came home. My songs are almost like one of those old school photo albums - each one of them comes from a real moment in time."

It's clear from the elegant architecture of her music that Snoh is someone who feels sound as a language. I'm keen to know if she has a favourite instrumental element when constructing a song. "A sound that I am still obsessed with is synth pads, and their application on a specific song. I still get shivers at the moment on 'Smooth Criminal' when the string pads hit - that last hook - my chest just explodes! I'm very obsessed with Michael Jackson. I am always discovering new clips of him. Michael Jackson and Disney soundtracks -

USA, Prince contacted her. When Snoh had posted a photo of her signing with L.A. Reid, Prince then called Reid for her number.

"It was a pretty unreal moment. He was one of my few heroes that was still alive. I'm not a star-struck person, but I did get very nervous around him. He definitely lived up to the myth of Prince. He really was like that. All those stories people have of Prince - they're all real. He took me to shows, Paris, all over. He would position me behind him on the stage by the piano so I could see what he did and why. It was a whole education. I was very inspired. It definitely became a mentorship. It meant a lot that he respected me as he could see I had my own integrity. These words of his I remember: 'Snoh, you have a responsibility. When I leave this earth, you are one of the people who has to carry the torch that I leave behind.'

I get the feeling that Snoh is a woman on a mission to create the sound, the 'homes' in her heart and head that

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all those sweet melodies - that innocent world of Disney. But there was also darkness with Michael, and with Disney. That delight in the scariness, in the fear."

I mention the Motown feel I get from her songs. "I have a flavour of it in my music, for sure. Motown was a distinct era, a time in music. You can only get inspired by it. I still discover songs I've never heard before. Everything was so special: live takes, one take. Crisp. Everything in analogue. There are definite elements I love about that - I do put all my songs through real tape. But my music is contemporary. Obviously, like all artists, I'd like to be timeless but me, myself, my style, I'm a tomboy, I'm feminine, modern, classy, but I cuss a little here and there. I am just a woman living my life at this time, 2018."

The understatement again. But it doesn't carry that much weight when she has been noticed amongst so many heavyweights already. The day after Snoh signed to Sony

are so rich with meaning and life in all its wonderful realness and transcendence. Maybe that's why she is on this quest for modern sonics, looking beyond her own genre for inspiration.

"I go to a lot of hip-hop shows. There is so much energy at those shows! It's different for someone who makes music like mine. The crowd is different. I admire that energy, that happiness at a rap show. I'm looking for more tempo, things to hit a lot harder. While my vocals are there, I want more harmonies and backgrounds on my next project. I do already co-produce a lot of my songs and most of my producers are hip-hop producers. I don't like HD sound, I like texture a lot, finding the right balance of muddiness without taking out too much of the quality. For me, my music is everything. I make music I like, as long as it makes me feel something. I can't do more than that in this life."

Again - the reduction of an immensity, the conundrum of Snoh. So much galaxy with its feet on the ground.