



Grimmie Grimmie More

From touring with Selena Gomez to duets on *The Voice* with Adam Levine and Ed Sheeran and opening the 2015 iHeart Radio Music Festival, Christina Grimmie is on a roll

Words by Vanessa Pascale

Christina Grimmie walks into the lobby of the Grand Hyatt New York dressed in head-to-toe black. A long, gold necklace hangs from her neck. Her deep-espresso-hued locks are pin straight and cut just above her shoulders.

You may recognize Christina from *The Voice* or her latest catchy single “Shrug.” Or maybe you know her from YouTube as she has over 3.1 million subscribers to-date. (She celebrated this milestone by posting her “piano + voice” rendition of Justin Bieber’s “What Do You Mean?”) But if you’re unfamiliar with the up-and-coming R&B/pop singer, that’s sure to change soon.

The sprightly New Jersey native, who has been living in Los Angeles for the last five years, has had a number of life changing doors open for her since hitting the YouTube scene at 16-years-old. By simply recording herself singing slowed down covers of hit songs like Sia’s “Elastic Heart” and Rhianna’s “Stay” while playing the keys (which she plays by ear, she doesn’t read notes) in her bedroom, she has accrued a monumental, devoted fan base. About a year into her YouTube career, Brian and Mandy Teefey (Selena Gomez’s mother and stepfather, respectively) discovered Christina and stepped in as her managers.

Though Brian and Mandy made the suggestion to Selena, it was ultimately Miss Gomez’s decision to have Christina join her on tour. “Selena watched all my videos. She’s like, ‘Absolutely, I want to have her on tour,’ so I actually went on tour with her twice, which was cool,” Christina says. From playing in her bedroom, zero stage experience, Christina went to “frolicking around” on stadium stages across the world. A natural performer, her first show went off without a hitch. “I just had this rush of adrenaline. I was very nervous beforehand... I actually got off stage and I started crying. I’m 17-years-old and I’m here opening for Miss Selena Gomez on her stadium tour, and *who am I* to be the one doing that? What a humbling moment,” she gushes.

Christina doesn’t take this career break lightly. Touring with Selena enabled her to navigate the stage and handle the pressures of her future national television debut on *The Voice* with grace. “Honestly, I don’t think I would’ve been able to pull off *The Voice* in any way, shape or form without having that prior experience. I truly, truly mean that from the bottom of my heart.”

Just like the song Christina sang when she first took the stage of *The Voice* Season 6, she came in like a “Wrecking Ball.” Every judge turned their chair around! First Usher, Shakira, Adam Levine, and then Blake Shelton. (I suggest you Google this goose-bump-inducing performance.) From the get-go, Christina wanted Adam as her coach, and that’s exactly who she chose. The fit was perfect. “He respected the fact that I was trying to be innovative and do new things and at the same time, stay true to who I was on YouTube: I took

covers and changed them completely. And he was, ‘You need to keep that going. What you’re doing is great. What you’re doing is raw and you need to keep that in your videos.’ Adam was amazing --super, super cool.”

Life has been a whirlwind since her appearance on *The Voice*. From there, she went on *The Voice* tour --one of her favorite tours. Christina loves seeing the crowd react to her music, and realizes that at times she may be too interactive with fans while on stage. “Sometimes I lose my will to be professional in that moment. Sometimes I want to party it up,” she says passionately, “Sometimes I want to grab people and pull people on stage. Let’s party... It’s no fun to have this invisible glass wall dividing you and the crowd. I think the more you interact with them, the better.”

Christina claims that being on *The Voice* has given her more legitimacy in the music world. “Sometimes people don’t take the YouTube kids seriously, and it drives me *crazy!* There are some crazy-talented people on YouTube that the industry people won’t even pay attention to because it’s ‘just YouTube.’ But now that I was on *The Voice*, it kinda opened some doors for me and that’s a huge blessing. I’m very happy that I did YouTube and then *The Voice*.” The soon-to-be-22-year-old’s grandiose fan base has also had a hand in her continued exposure as their votes helped her win the 2015 Macy’s iHeart Radio Rising Star competition. Last September, Christina opened up the iHeart Radio Music Festival, whose lineup included Kanye West, Coldplay, Demi Lovato.... At the time of our interview, Christina had returned to *The Voice* as Kohl’s Style Correspondent

--sharing with viewers the styles the contestants were wearing and how to get the look, every week. Later that night, Christina was scheduled to sing a cover of Bonnie Tyler’s song, “Holding Out For A Hero” at the star-studded Humane Society Gala across the street at Cipriani.

This whirlwind of Christina’s keeps spinning, and she’s not about to let it stop. When I ask about Justin Bieber, a fellow former YouTuber, she recalls some advice he gave her while they were hanging out in Selena’s dressing room during her first tour. “You just have to keep the hustle going, because if you don’t do that, you’re going to fall off real fast,” which is what happens. So I took that and ran with it. I’m working my butt off now.” Christina is working on her new EP (*Side A* comes out February 21), booking more shows (on tour with Rachel Platten February 26- March 16), and is in the market for a record label that believes in her.

One day, she hopes to be in the same category as the Christina Aguilera (her favorite singer) and Ariana Grande (an artist whose career path she hopes to mirror), but at the root of her aspirations is the desire to simply inspire. “I’m not saying my goal is to be really famous, I just want to spark an inspiration in people in some way, shape or form. I feel like I’m doing that so far and I couldn’t be happier about it. So if this is the furthest I ever get, then that’s honestly fine with me. I am going to push for the best, because I’m not going to sit here and do nothing.”

Keep up with Christina on Twitter: @TheRealGrimmie Instagram: TheRealGrimmie YouTube.com/zeldaxlove64 and www.ChristinaGrimmie.com

Did You Know?

Early Life in Music: From 3rd-6th grade, Christina played the flute in band and was in choir, but never sang in front of her family or friends growing up, because she was so shy.

On the Television: “I watch *Friends* every chance I get --that’s my favorite. I love *Law & Order*. I love all the crime shows. *Project Runway*, *Top Model*.”

Dream Show: Japan

Fan Fare: She loves interacting with fans. “You never want to do just what you want, then people aren’t interested, so I got into this routine of taking requests from people and I think being personal is a very huge part of it. You have to be genuine. You have to interact with them, and I love that. They’re like my friends now,” Christina beams about her interaction with her YouTube subscribers.