

NYLON

SINGAPORE

19

daughters
of rock 'n roll
including:

amber le bon
alexandra richards
atlanta de cadenet
daisy lowe
elizabeth jagger
kelly osbourne
lily collins
liv tyler
stella mccartney
tali lennox
theodora richards

gnossem goes
global featuring
the noisettes



en route:
london fashion
and music

ROCK ROYALTY

shingai shoniwa wants us to never forget her.

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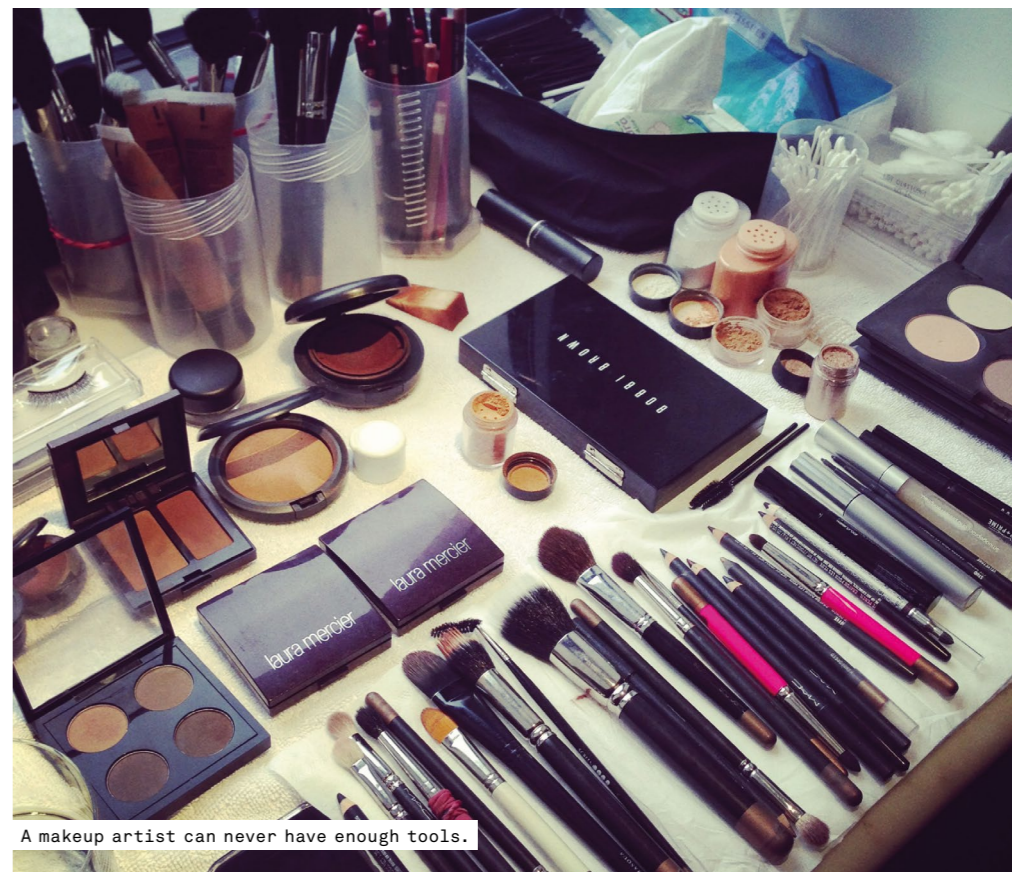
Hairstylist Takashi Sano takes a much-needed Pret a Manger break.



Dr. Martens and Chanel boots on set.



Gloves, hats and more for the shoot.



A makeup artist can never have enough tools.

under cover: shingai shoniwa

Like any photoshoot, there's a lot of waiting around... waiting for the photographer to set up the lights, waiting for the clothes steamer to heat up, but mostly, waiting for the makeup to get done. While the clock ticks and everyone starts getting anxious, our cover star Shingai tells us to chill, "let's have positive energy in here. This is the creative space." And she means well. This celebrity exudes happy vibes from the second she steps into the hotel suite at The Halkin by COMO, where the photoshoot is being held. She greets everyone with sincerity, repeats after names, and like any down-to-earth British true blood, she orders some tea and toast because she hasn't had lunch yet. So between our star scoffing down slices of fresh bread and the makeup artist, Suzy blending glitter eyeshadow onto Shingai's wonderfully gorgeous eyes, we're thinking, this is one shoot that feels so comfortable (possibly also owing to the location), it's unlikely that we'll forget this girl anytime soon. By Adele Chan



FOR SHINGAI'S LOOK, TRY: tropical taboo zoom lash mascara in black extreme, \$29; temperature rising powerchrome eye pencil in copper strip, \$36; temperature rising lipglass in liquid passion, \$32; temperature rising eye shadow x 4 in bare my soul, \$72; tropical taboo mineralize skinfinish in gold deposit, \$50; all about orange powder blush in immortal flower, \$36; temperature rising pro longwear bronzer in sun dipped, \$50; all about orange lipstick in razzledazzler, 29; all about orange nail lacquer in fiestaware, \$22; all items from m.a.c cosmetics.

INTERNATIONAL ROCK STAR

it's pronounced "shin-guy", but "shing-ee" is alright if you must. the noisettes singer talks to nylon singapore about everything from style to spirituality. text by joshua tan. photographed by lucia o'connor-mccarthy. art direction by adele chan.

dress by jil sander; and earrings by gillian horsup at grays.

styling: INES FRAVEZZI
makeup: SUZY RYCROFT using M.A.C Cosmetics
hair: TAKASHI SANO at Sano Salon using Bumble and Bumble
hair colourist: DAVID GILKINSON at Sano Salon using Wella
nail technician: CAMILLA KIRK-REYNOLDS using Bio Sculpture Gel
photography assistants: HANNAH POWLING and ANTONIO MILEVCIC
styling assistants: ZHANA MEDVESH and DARIA EGAY
hair assistant: KIYOKO

shot on location at the halkin by como, london.

IT'S NOT YET a third of the way through the year and Shingai Shoniwa, one half of British indie-soul-pop-rock outfit Noisettes (it's hard to pin them down to just one genre), has gotten more big things done than I have in the past 12 months. She's bungee-jumped 111 metres off Victoria Falls with her brother for a dare, climbed the highest mountain in Zimbabwe, gotten off a plane and headed straight to perform at the British Academy of Film and Television Arts awards, played at Coachella, and, as you may have heard, will be performing again in Singapore at Avalon on the 8th of June.

You'd think she would go on a well-earned break after everything listed above, but no – this is her break; these six solid weeks through January of uninterrupted adventure in Zimbabwe, swinging through the mist of the Zambezi River and staring down a gorge, are the first she's taken time off from Noisettes for more than a week in the past five years. So, no, she doesn't really stop, if at all. What she does, though, is learn all the way through: "Creativity never sleeps, you know. It's always there tugging at your feet, and I think you have to keep your environment quite varied – then it doesn't feel like work. It just feels like you're responding to being inspired."





Just looking at pictures of the band, you'll know it's nearly impossible to look at Shingai without noticing her hair – it's never just hair, on its own, but always in a 'do of some sort. The great thing about it is that she always does her own hair for shows as a sort of therapy; a "fine madness". Getting ready for shows takes anywhere from 10 minutes to much, much longer if she has, as she's had, a crazy, geometric shape in mind, or a full-on Spanish galleon with sails in it. I cannot relate, having something resembling the fuzz on a peach for my own head, but it does sound like quite a bit of fun, and it definitely contributes to the show atmosphere as part of her own method of expression.

It's hard to decide which comes first, whether her hair influences her dressing, or her dressing influences her hair (or maybe they all affect each other). Regardless, she is fortunate enough to possess a very strong personal sense of style, leading up to her current collaboration with Gnossem – an online retailer for independent fashion designers – for their upcoming show in Singapore: "At the moment, it's [Gnossem] a bit of a best-kept secret. Secrets are cool, but I think it deserves to be more well known." And a quick browse through Gnossem's website will be anything but quick – the retailer recently acquired another round of up-and-coming designer labels to add to their immense slew: Charlotte Taylor, Duepunti, ai.ko and Mad About Hues – many of which Shingai, herself, will be brandishing during her trip to Singapore.

But on the subject of vanity, Shingai tries to steer clear from all narcissistic behaviour; though she agrees that it is necessary once in a while to take a look at what the internet is saying – if not for making sure the facts are right ("I'm not a regular browser of my own content, no."), then to find interesting things to post to the group's Tumblr account. She is particularly annoyed with Wikipedia, having had two different heights and three ages over the course of her existence on the online encyclopaedia. Another entry, on the main Noisettes article on Wikipedia, once said that Dan Smith, the other half of the band, with a Trinidadian mother and Scottish father – "a proper rainbow child" – was racist. Which is a bit of a funny accusation, when you remember that both Dan and Shingai come from their own diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

dress by [burberry prorsum](#); hand pendants necklace by [butler & wilson](#); and ring by [maria piana](#).

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Before their current incarnation, Shingai and Dan met during their time at the BRIT School, a performing arts institution in south London. After graduation, Shingai drifted from retail job to retail job and, by her own admission, got fired from every single one of them for daydreaming too much. Only it wasn't daydreaming in the strictest sense of the word. It was more like practising theatre scripts in the back room, or humming a song in her head, so it was a relief when an offer came from Dan to join him and his father in a cover band where she earned between £40 to £50 a show, three nights a week – good money compared to doing four shifts at a clothing retailer for the same amount.

But the idea of a cover band wore off after a while – “there's only so many times you can sing *Ain't No Mountain High Enough* [before you get bored].” So they began to sneak their own originals into their sets, exposing people to their music at all sorts of gigs like weddings, funerals, and bar mitzvahs, where they were received warmly.

Despite their very earliest beginnings as a cover band, Shingai is quick to make a distinction between cover acts, and bands like hers that gain popularity based on an entirely original repertoire. Noisettes are, in a sense, a band that came into existence only when they decided to make the jump from the first to the latter.

You can push her into giving her opinion on the likes of X Factor winners or Birdy, who have made their name through covers, but she remains adamant on what she considers the better route to stardom: “When we went to go and get signed, it wasn't on the backs of anyone else's songs; we got signed on the backs of our own songs... I'd rather base my career on my own creativity and allow myself to be inspired by others, but I wouldn't feel comfortable with copying other people; to base my career on that.” And despite all this, Shingai also considers it – evolution – essential to every performer, drawing from her background in theatre, drama, dance, and her love of art, and folding it into what she does as a musician. She is well aware and appreciative of the good things learning a wide repertoire of songs has brought, allowing her to have jam sessions all over the world – even stumbling across a warehouse party late at night and doing an impromptu samba rendition of Nirvana's *Smells Like Teen Spirit*.

top by [toton at gnossem](#); pants by [haizhen wang](#); headpiece by [mich dulce](#); vintage belt and gloves by [ysl at vintage modes](#); and earrings by [gillian horsup at grays](#).

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A cursory listen of their songs will reveal a voice with the inflections of soul and jazz greats like Ella Fitzgerald and Nina Simone – Shingai credits her influences as ranging widely from the aforementioned singers, to 60s and 70s African bands. She tries to keep herself aware of and open to as many styles of music as possible, or “a bit like a diet”, she says, “as long as I can connect to the spirit behind it. There’s something amazing in all kinds of music from around the world. The beauty of pop music is that you can then just bring it all together and... put them in a simple melody with a simple refrain.”

Throughout the interview, she mentions how amazed she is by African, Asian, and Latin American culture, and how it represents vast untapped potential for Western artistes if only they’d make the effort to understand different cultures. A lot of what she’s saying sounds vaguely spiritual or philosophical, but it’s really the product of an international soul, growing up in England and touring the world while always remembering her Zimbabwean and Malawian heritage; using these diverse experiences to inform her music and views; as well as hoping to bring a wider perspective to the Western world.

“Places outside the West, they get depicted as [having] flies on the nose [and] living on £3 a week – there’s so much amazing stuff going on in the developing world; so much creativity, so much life... it’s part of my job to show people of the West what an amazing contribution African culture has had on the arts, [and] on the idea of the West as having been an empire. I know I sound like a hippie, but I do believe that music can promote this amazing common understanding.”

This idea in the search for a greater understanding lends itself not only to that between cultures, but also for greater understanding along and between racial and gender lines, and makes her pause for a bit. Shingai doesn’t consider herself a spokeswoman or role model, but she is happy enough that she’s in a position where she is able to project a “positive and creative image of a young woman of colour, doing something creative and being successful”, all while focusing on places outside of Europe and America.



cape, skirt, leggings, earrings and hat, by [chanel](#).

dress and belt by [mcq alexander mcqueen](#); and necklace and earrings by [tina lillenthal](#).



The conversation soon turns to her experiences in Singapore. Having previously performed at SINGfest in 2007, she commented on the presence of construction cranes all over the city: "We got the funicular [tram] to that crazy island Sentosa, and Dan nicknamed it Cement-tosa because they were still building it." I tell her they're always building something – the Singapore of 2013 is a different place from the Singapore of 2007, what with all that constant construction. If you think about it, it really wasn't that long ago when the old National Library was still around. That aside, it is easy to see – and hear – why this musician is so interested in the world at large: experiencing new places gives her energy, and it is this energy which she pours back into her songwriting. Their next album, perhaps, will hold the most potential for us to see how this has all worked out. Shingai hints at a "tropical, afro-centric, proper pop record", but after listening to all her experiences up until now, it's more than likely that it won't be just an afro-centric album – it might be that, and a whole lot more.



jacket and shorts by [finders keepers](#) at [gnossem](#); top by [h&m](#); necklace by [butler & wilson](#); ring by [gillian horsup](#) at [grays](#); headpiece by [gabriela ligenza](#); and shoes by [sophia webster](#).

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GNOSEM GOES GLOBAL

Gnossem presents Noisettes live in Singapore at Avalon on June 8, 2013, with supporting acts Monster Cat and Tanya Phillips. Gnossem will be donating 100% of the profit from Gnossem Goes Global to charity, helping less fortunate children in Singapore with education, and developing opportunities for them. Tickets are priced from \$55 to \$65, available from gnossem.com/tickets.

Follow the band online at [facebook.com/thenoisettes](https://www.facebook.com/thenoisettes), twitter.com/noisettes and noisettes.co.uk.

Shop Gnossem online at gnossem.com.



cardigan and shoes by [versus](#); dress by [lion_earl](#) at [gnossem](#); and headpiece by [gabriela_ligenza](#).



dress by [jane_bowler](#); and knickers by [urban_outfitters](#).