



LANA DEL REY

Until she posted her self-made clip for a haunting torch song called Video Games onto YouTube last May, Lana Del Rey was almost an entirely unknown. She'd recorded her first album, Lana Del Rey aka Lizzy Grant, in 2008 but it didn't surface on iTunes until January 2010, and then only briefly.

The Video Games clip, with its found footage and sunburnt images of her, made a sensation of Del Rey. At the time of writing, it has had more than 10 million views on YouTube. There are many homemade reinterpretations of the song on the site and it's been covered by acts as diverse as Kasabian, Bombay Bicycle Club and Jamie Cullum.

Influential bloggin sites such as Pitchfork were quick to embrace Del Rey, suggesting she "hit the sweet spot Cat Power has vacated" and positioning her as indie rock's new queen apparent. But the tide turned. In September a blog was posted on Hipster RunOff entitled Lana Del Rey: Exposed. It huffed that Del Rey had been backed by major label Interscope all along. Soon doubts were cast about whether she'd really made the Video Games clip herself or even written the song. Since she came from a well-heeled family, bloggers asked why she'd spoken of living in a trailer park if not to burnish her own myth. Then there are the claims of her having had plastic surgery. In photos of her performing as Lizzy Grant, her lips seem not so full, evidence enough for some that she'd since enhanced her appearance.

Such is the nature of modern fame: in a flash Lana Del Rey went from being hailed a bolt of lightning to battling accusations she was an elaborate construct.

Notwithstanding that the arts of reinvention and myth-making are ingrained in the fabric of popular music (cf. Lady Gaga), one suspects Del Rey upset tastemakers simply because of the way she looks and the fact that she wasn't Cat Power after all.

Ferdy Unger-Hamilton, President of Polydor Records in the UK, dismissed the notion that Del Rey is a puppet. He insists that he didn't sign her until last September, having first met her a year previously.

"Lana knows what she wants like few artists I've ever met," he says. "She likes to control every aspect of her career. often we come across someone who is really good at writing songs or singing them, or has a great visual sense, but Lana is that rare thing - someone who can do it all."

A week after the Q photo shoot, the end of November, and I'm having coffee with Lana Del Rey in her hotel bedroom. She is wearing a white crop top and jeans; her feet are bare and there's little evidence of any make up on her face, which is hypnotically beautiful.

She is bright, engaging and unfailingly sweet. While her mannerisms are prim like those of a 20's high-society belle from the pages of an Edith Wharton novel, she has a laugh that escalates from girlish giggle to filthy cackle. This morning she cleaned her own room. It is spotless and clear of any kind of clutter or personal effect.

Lana Del Rey, nee Elizabeth Grant, was born 25 years ago and grew up in Lake Placid, a village of less than 3000 inhabitants in rural New

She looks demonic standing here in her white slip dress and prom queen crown, blood running down her forehead, staring into the camera. Her expression switches by the frame from looking either like she's mourning someone or about to knife them. She photographs like a model, which is to say the camera accentuates the big deep pools of her eyes and the epic pout of her lips.

During a break in the Q cover shoot in this West London photo studio, Lana Del Rey walks over to a computer screen that is projecting back each picture of her taken. The one on screen now is an extreme close-up of her face: on it her mascara is streaked and her crown askew. She appears bruised and broken.

"That," she says, pointing an extravagantly nailed finger at the screen, "that's my life."