

In the penthouse room of a central London hotel Amy Winehouse is having her make up done as she looks out onto a grey skyline. A photographer waits in the bedroom to take pictures for a national newspaper feature and we sit on sofa's watching 'This Morning' chatting about Philip Schofield's silver hair and his days with Gordon the Gopher. Left over coffee and croissants grace the table and hip-hop pumps out of a stereo – the atmosphere is pure chilled. The 20 year old from West London is ready for a full on day of interviews and with her two Brit nominations she's been talked about more than ever! "It's really overwhelming y'know at the minute" she said of her burst onto the scene, "I have been writing for years now so it doesn't seem like it's come along out of nowhere so I guess I was prepared, y'know what I mean, I haven't been thrown into the deep end or anything."

Her sound is most often compared to Erykah Badu; the reviews of her debut album 'Frank' have been tremendous. The album has mainly been her work; "I wrote the whole album none of it's been easy, none of it comes like that, it's all been a challenge but that's why I'm doing it, I wouldn't do it unless it was a challenge."

It's been a full on roller coaster for Amy. She's already gained respect in the business through her nominations for Best Urban Artist and Best British Solo artist. For one who's been acclaimed so early in her career by a British market which is often accused of not supporting its own, she's got the UK in the palm of her hand at the moment. "There's not that much here [UK] to support," she says.

Her brand of jazz is a record labels dream because its fan base is so varied. Amy's tracks get airplay on everything from 1Xtra to Radio 2 and her brand of jazz fused with hip-hop is being bought by everyone from 14 to 80 year olds. "It's still a surprise when I get someone going 'My Nan heard you...' It's mad!" Refreshingly it's in her live performances where her heart lies; "I wanna be doing at least two gigs a week. I get gutted if I can't do more than two gigs a week; I'm much more comfortable live. It's cool doing all the promos as long as you've got the gigs to back it up so you don't feel your going mad."

Amy Winehouse's voice may sound like it belongs in a backroom of a bar but she'll be in the charts for a while longer. Her only hope is simple; "Please God I will make an album which is clear on there as it is in my mind," we'll just have to wait and see what Miss Winehouse can deliver in the future.

In the lounge we look at the pictures taken earlier on a state of the art laptop. It'd be hard to say Amy's not stunning, more of Badu fused rebel without a cause who's only just begun her hip jazz journey.

# AMY WINEHOUSE

by Angharad Williams

## M2F caught up with Waquas from Outlandish ....

### How did you all get into hip-hop?

We were hanging out as friends, all listening to our own stuff. Lenny was into Latin American Music, Isam was a fan of Michael Jackson and I was listening to Bruce Springsteen. We started listening to hip-hop when all the young people around where we were living started getting into break-dancing, and were playing stuff like Public Enemy and Run DMC. We were never that good at breaking so we decided to pick up the mic instead and at first we imitated the 'gangsta' style of the artists like Snoop and Dre, who were big at the time.

### When did you begin to take the music seriously?

As we began listening to more varied hip-hop we realised that it wasn't all about the bling and that it was a way to express yourself and your culture. We were all doing our own thing - working, studying - and we worked on our music in our spare time and it was only when we saw the success of our first album in Denmark that we began to move towards working on our music full-time.

### How did you all meet?

Lenny and I were at school together, so have known each other for years. Isam went to another school in the same area and we just ended up hanging out together.

### Why the name Outlandish?

We chose the name as it represents everything we're about. It's about our music and lyrics which are a bit different to the norm.

### How has your different backgrounds influenced your music?

We all bring different elements to the Outlandish sound. I grew up surrounded by a lot of Bollywood music and I remember being stood in the hall way at home one day while my mum had her music on, and I was playing hip-hop in the room next door. I suddenly heard the two combined and thought it made a great sound. This was years before the current trend for Asian influenced hip-hop and I really think it sums up our attitude to music. We like to take ethnic samples, be they Asian, Arabic or South American, and blend them with hip-hop lyrics.

### How did 'Outland's Official' come to be?

We put the album together whilst we were studying / working. Having been working on our music together for a while we were lucky enough to be offered the opportunity to release the album in Denmark and it resulted in us winning the 'Best Hip Hop' award at the Danish Music Awards.

### Were you surprised by the reaction it received?

Surprised and pleased.

### When did you realize you were being recognized on an international level?

It was only with the second album, 'Bread & Barrels Of Water' that we began to make a mark internationally and the UK was actually the first place we focused on with the release of 'Guantanamo' last year. We also released the single 'Aicha' in Germany and it exploded, going to number 1 and staying there for 6 weeks. The realisation only really hit us when we began to travel and could see the reaction to our live performances.

### Your new album brings some big names together on 'Beats Rhymes & Life', how did that come together?

It was really a chance for us to show a small sample of music that has had an influence on the group's sound.

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### Who else have you worked with?

We've toured with Busta Rhymes and Kelly Rowland from Destiny's Child, and it was amazing to see the reaction these guys get from a crowd.

### Is there anyone you'd like to work with in the future?

We'd love to work with Sade, probably not the person people would expect us to pick but we love the way she puts her heart and soul into her music.

### What are you working on at the moment?

We've got the new album 'Beats, Rhymes & Life' which is released on April 26th, and Rishi Rich has done a great remix of 'Walou' which is our next single.

### Can we see you in the UK sometime soon?

You sure can, we're playing Notting Hill Arts Club on April 20th to launch the new album, and the following night we're performing at the MTV Base Lounge at the CC Club.

### What do you hope for the future?

To expand the Outlandish name and show people that hip hop is not all about the bling-bling that seems to be favoured by a lot of the acts that are making moves on the charts today.

# outlandish

