



2009 saw Erika Heynatz shift her focus to music. After collaborating with highly respected musicians and producers, the result is an impressive debut album.

# ERIKA

## HEYNATZ: QUEEN OF THE KINGDOM

**ERIKA HEYNATZ** is flattered to be the cover girl on our smart-themed issue, adamant that 'people will love the oxymoron.'

Humble and modest, Erika is actually the epitome of 'smart' having, at a young age, carefully carved out her path to success.

It has been just over three years since we saw Erika on the cover of the very first issue of the *Fitness First* magazine. Since then, she's achieved great successes, having secured a recording contract with EMI, tying the knot with partner Andrew Kingston, and co-hosting the very show that launched her singer/songwriter career. She has also continued to secure presenting gigs, no surprise when you consider she earned herself an Astra award for Best Female Presenter in 2007.

More recently, however, Erika's focus has shifted to music. 2009 saw her scouting the world and collaborating with highly respected musicians and producers in a bid to create her very first debut album, which is due for release in May. This album will, no doubt, be a successful follow up to the release of her first single, called 'Kingdom' (which is available now).

You'd be right for thinking there is no end to Erika's pool of talents.

When we get to hang with Erika, she's just back from LA having done motion capture filming for a computer game. Instantly images of Lara Croft come to mind and we can't help but be envious of the fun she is having!

Erika assures us that it's all hard work, but she is very grateful for the wonderful opportunities and the life that she is living. Here, she shares the secrets to her success.

**FF:** When modelling, did you feel that your intellect and intelligence were overlooked?

**EH:** There's always going to be broad assumptions on intellect and talent when it comes to models, but I think I've avoided any of those generalisations by diversifying my career beyond work that is simply based on being an image/face. Working in film, TV, radio and music has always given me a voice. I think people know there are only a very few lucky ones in life that can solely trade on their looks long term. Most are revealed to be successful due to being

shrewd and savvy businesswomen.

**FF:** Did you make conscious decisions early in your life/career, which had a big hand in getting you to where you are today?

**EH:** Shamelessly, all the things I have achieved to date – creatively, personally, and professionally – are goals I set for myself at an early age. Despite being very driven as an individual, some of the goals have taken a very long time and via a rugged road to actualise, but I believe persistence pays off. I don't think I've ever just been in 'the right place at the right time' or relied on luck or chance. Conscious choice has enabled me to steer my way to places I want to go in life. I have kept lists of written goals, created at various ages, but I don't share that information because I think you ruin the power and magic of that private process by doing so.

**FF:** Your father was in the navy, so you travelled around a lot when you were growing up. Do you think had an impact on your enjoyment for travel as an adult?

**EH:** Moving around so much at such a young age exposed me to great adventures, and I learned to thrive in a constant state of upheaval having to deal with so many different environments, new schools, and making new friends.

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Adaptation has been a handy skill to have in a career that sees me flung between countries, hotels, professional circles, networks, and friendships. I also did some of my schooling via correspondence on board a yacht, where my parents played the role of the teachers. It was great in terms of accelerated learning and gaining knowledge that I could instantly apply.

Settling down was difficult and a foreign concept for me throughout most of my young adulthood, especially while I was modeling. But that existence proved to be a lonely one for the



“There are many days on the job, when I think, ‘Nope, this is not your average day at the office. How lucky am I to do this?’”

“I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER STOP APPRECIATING THE GREAT FORTUNE AND DIVERSITY THAT I EXPERIENCE IN MY PROFESSIONAL LIFE. I'M CONSTANTLY INSPIRED.”



Erika's single 'Kingdom' is available digitally now

larger part, and nowadays I cherish the stability of a home and the solid friendships that anchor me to Sydney.

**FF:** You've been married for three years now. Does your husband Andrew accompany you when you travel abroad for work?

**EH:** Andrew has been able to travel with me a fair bit, which is brilliant. He loves the perks of travel and turns into Qantas-clubbing, five-star, first-class, king of room service when he has the time to travel with me. It's much more fun to have someone who rolls with you, to share the experience. I'm usually learning a script while he's blissed out, busting open another can of beer nuts while watching TV in bed!

When I'm alone abroad, I've got a strong in-built homing beacon that drives me back to my fella. Marriage, by far, has been the most incredible and special thing in my life for the past three years; honestly, every day just gets better! It's great because it feels like I'm still dating him!

**FF:** Before you won *It Takes Two* had you ever envisioned embarking on a singing career?

**EH:** I've always aspired to be an entertainer, and singing is the ultimate and most exhilarating form of creative expression for me. Signing with EMI and having the chance to write, record and produce an album is something I've always wanted to do. There have been many moments during this process when working in amazing studios surrounded by incredible musicians, where I've thought, this is unbelievable; it's exactly what I've always seen for myself and it's finally happening. As a result, every part of the creating the album, even the tough ones, I have relished.

**FF:** Your debut album is being released in May. How are you feeling about it?

**EH:** I remember one particular moment when I ran out of the Village Studios in LA to catch the plane home to Sydney. I had a rough mix of the album on CD in my hand, and I was sitting in the back seat of the cab thinking I was about to spontaneously combust with excitement. The driver took one look at me and said, 'Wow, someone's had a really good day!' I think he copped the full taxi-cab-confession of my entire recording experience.

To have the finished product is a huge sense of accomplishment, and there's no greater joy than sharing it. Looking back at those early ideas, which were eventually built and shaped with musicians, and refined by producers into the songs you'll hear on the album, I'm really happy

with the body of work and how it represents me.

There's always the temptation to keep finessing and tweaking things on the album, but then there's the risk of losing some of that lovely spontaneity you get in the initial moments that occur during recording. I understand that now is the time to step away and share the music, and feel proud of the way it speaks about me at this time in my life. Then I'll start to write more songs!

**FF:** Had you written any songs before the EMI contract came along?

**EH:** From a very young age, I've always kept visual and written journals and even moreso, when I was traveling on my own around the world during my modeling career. Revising those journals is a great way to plug back in to a really significant time in my life and relive it lyrically, so they have become a great source of material when I am songwriting.

**FF:** How would you describe your music and what has influenced and inspired you?

**EH:** My music has a guitar-based, melodic pop feel, using earthy, acoustic and organic sounding instruments (rather than heavy programming or production). I'm inspired by really spirited and dynamic female artists like Annie Lennox, Sheryl Crowe, and Carly Simon, and strong narrative writers like Joni Mitchell, Suzanne Vega and Fiona Apple.

**FF:** It's easy to watch talented people perform but how hard is it all really to do so?

**EH:** All the hard work that goes on pre-performance is what, hopefully, gives you the freedom to get out there and just play and have fun on stage. The real skill is obvious in those artists who are so present and engaging that they make it look easy when, of course, it's not. I'm not afraid of all the hard work, especially when the rewards are so rich.

**FF:** What advice would you give aspiring singer/songwriters?

**EH:** Find like-minded creative communities of people that you can be around to listen to and learn from. It's important to expose yourself to as much music as possible so that you're constantly inspired and, like a big kid, maintain a strong appetite to learn. Also be generous and courageous as possible when sharing your ideas without the fear of making mistakes.

#### TONI KRASICKI

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