



Curves Ahead

Emmy Rossum dishes on channeling her loud alter ego on TV, singing with Pavarotti and learning to trust her instincts.

| *By Andrew Myers* | *Photography by Brian Bowen Smith* |

| *Styling by Neil Rodgers at Tracey Mattingly* |

| *Shot on location at The Hotel Café* |

Gypsum viscose plunge draped evening gown with chain strap, \$3,495, at Donna Karan New York. Bead and diamond bracelets, \$765-\$875 each, by Honesty at Intermix. On him: Tuxedo by Dolce & Gabbana at mrporter.com.

“Hurry up! What do you think, I’m getting younger? Skinnier? I’m not!” Dressed in the last look at the end of a five-hour photo shoot, actress and singer-songwriter Emmy Rossum—looking sleek, sophisticated and sultry, like a well-polished Hollywood screen siren of old—is playfully sassing the photographer and crew. She modulates her tone and stance, conjuring that other classic Tinseltown staple: the wise-cracking comedienne.

The atmosphere is enhanced by *Sentimental Journey*, Rossum’s sophomore album, which releases later this month, playing in the background. On it, she sings 1940s standards. And the setting of the shoot itself, a retro joint in Hollywood—the kind sympathetic to dames on the go, debutantes on the town and ladies of a certain age (or of the night)—is exactly the sort of place where such songs are sung. Rossum seems to be channeling the sort of woman who can wield a sharp word alongside a cigarette holder while holding her gin.

It’s also the kind of trendy but not too scrubbed-up drinks destination that might attract Fiona, the nudity-friendly free spirit burdened by familial responsibilities whom Rossum plays on *Shameless*, Showtime’s dark comedy series that begins its third season this month.

The scene is a snapshot of Rossum’s career to date. It showcases her still-unfolding talents and capabilities while illustrating a focused character and resilient constitution. It’s a package—and a journey—that has taken her from the stage of the Metropolitan Opera, to the big screen as the ingénue star of *The Day After Tomorrow*, *Mystic River* and her watershed at age 18, *The Phantom of the Opera*. Now she’s

added *Shameless* to that list, as well as February’s feature film *Beautiful Creatures*—with Jeremy Irons, Viola Davis and Emma Thompson—based on the supernatural young-adult series of the same name written by Kami Garcia and Margaret Stohl. “She was a character so noisy I couldn’t get her out of my mind,” says Rossum of her character, Ridley. “She’s not a nice person but she’s insanely likable. I kept thinking about how she’d talk, how she’d speak, and how that’s seductive.” Later this year she’ll also appear opposite Hilary Swank in *You’re Not You*.

Born and reared on New York’s tony Upper East Side, Rossum attended the equally tony Spence School, but her reality wasn’t as gilded as these facts suggest. While she grew up with a surfeit of attention and support as the only child of a single mother, a professional photographer who shot the annual reports for companies such as Apple and Exxon Mobil, she grew up with neither a father nor much cash. “My mother was both my mother and father,” says Rossum, explaining that her parents split before she was born, that she and her mother shared a bedroom and that every spare dime was allotted to her tuition. “My mom is an artist and intellectual, which for her is basically the same thing,” she says. “Education was paramount.”

Perhaps it’s no coincidence, then, that Rossum’s first break came from a suggestion from her second grade teacher, who, having noted Rossum’s affinity for singing, told her mother about the Metropolitan Opera Children’s Chorus. “Mom set up the audition,” says Rossum, confirming the tryout entailed an a cappella “Happy Birthday” in all 12 keys. She joined the chorus at age 7, and trained for the next five years, learning stagecraft and classical vocal technique, performing in five languages in 20 different operas alongside Plácido Domingo and Luciano Pavarotti, and under the direction of maestros such as Franco Zeffirelli.



Gold floral lace bustier dress, \$4,995, by Burberry Prorsum at Burberry. Tango 18K rose gold and brown diamond pavé bracelet, \$101,490, at Pomellato. Elba high heel pumps in black iridescent leopard, \$565, by Rupert Sanderson at rupertsanderson.com.

"I don't let anything send me into a tailspin.
I never have; it's not in my nature."



Silk crepe dress with cut-out side panels and embroidered gold trim, \$6,950, at Reem Acra. Zephyr bracelet, \$51,600, at H. Stern. Tuxedos by Dolce & Gabbana at mirporter.com.

To Rossum, it was simply good fun. "It was all a magical fantasy world, that kind of journey I've always loved that you can get from a good book or any of the arts, the kind that transports you," she says. As an only child, she reveled in the sense of family and community. Additionally, it was an alternative to Spence and the whole monied ethos of the Upper East Side. "It's not that I didn't enjoy school; it's more that I felt a little 'less than,'" she says.

While Rossum didn't yet envision a career in entertainment, she was nonetheless precociously determined. At age 12, on her own initiative, she phoned acting coach Flo Salant Greenberg of The New Actors Workshop. "I'd read an article in *The New York Times* on Matt LeBlanc—I was really into *Friends*—and Flo was his teacher. So I looked her up in the Yellow Pages." She started classes shortly thereafter, and found herself among a group of more seasoned and professional actors. This prepared her for her debut film, *Songcatcher*, in which she played Deladis Slocumb, a musically talented orphan in turn-of-the-century Appalachia.

Rossum starred alongside Aidan Quinn and Janet McTeer, received an Independent Spirit Award nomination for Best Debut Performance, sang a duet with Dolly Parton on the film's soundtrack and signed with the manager she's had ever since. She was 13. "I realized the decisions I was making were going to affect my whole life," Rossum says, adding that her mother was supportive, emphasizing the importance of those decisions with the caveat that "the second it stops being fun, you're going to stop doing it." Those words, Rossum says, always made her feel she "wasn't locked in. I still think about them."

TV work came quickly, too—she portrayed a young Audrey Hepburn in the ABC TV movie *The Audrey Hepburn Story*. But it was the trifecta of *Mystic River*, in which she played Sean Penn's murdered daughter; the big-budget Roland Emmerich eco-disaster movie *The Day After Tomorrow*, in which she co-starred opposite Jake Gyllenhaal; and *The Phantom of the Opera* that catapulted Rossum onto the plush red carpets.

Having left Spence after the fifth grade, obtaining her high school diploma by age 15 via Stanford's online Education Program for Gifted Youth, she was progressing professionally full throttle. But she was also confused. "I didn't feel I'd earned [the level of success]," she says. "I was conscious it could all disappear." As her image was splashed on the covers of magazines, Rossum sought security by becoming what might

be considered the quintessence of an Upper East Side-Audrey Hepburn hybrid: ladylike, refined and demurely reserved. "I didn't realize how claustrophobic that would be," she says. "There are many things you try to prove as a kid that you keep trying to prove into your 20s."

What followed was a period of trial and error. "I did *Poseidon*, thinking a big ensemble would feel safe," she says, explaining that she made the majority of her personal and professional decisions based on logic, what she considered sound, objective reasoning. "I talked myself into projects and relationships that weren't always right for me," she states. Now, however, her MO is trusting her gut. "If the milk doesn't smell good, don't drink it. It can be that simple."

That unwavering focus resulted in *Sentimental Journey*, which Rossum made without the help of a label. "Taking the future into my own hands was why I created this record," she says. "I just decided to do it with my own money." Rossum made the record she wanted with the intent of releasing it online, but ended up selling it to a label, on her terms.

It's this same determination that also ultimately led to the part that has re-energized her career and confirmed her commitment to it. It's also the part that very nearly wasn't. "They didn't want to see me; they wouldn't even [let me] audition," says Rossum of the *Shameless* producers. "They thought my image too glamorous, that I couldn't not be pretty."

Having read and loved the script, Rossum decided to fight fast and hard. She made a tape of herself as Fiona, sent it from New York to L.A., and made sure it got to the producers. "They watched it and I flew out the next day." Three auditions later, she was informed there was only one note on her performance: that she had the

job, remembers Rossum, who was so deep in character she let loose with a string of expletives upon hearing the news—"which only seemed to confirm [the producers'] decision."

So the golden girl has grown up, shedding her perfectly polished image along the way. "Fiona is very sexually liberated. She's also a loudmouth, and there's safety in that," Rossum says. "But I'm not the sex-on-the-first-date kind of girl." What Rossum does identify with is Fiona's loyalty—"I'm a very loyal person too, sometimes to a fault"—as well as her ability to adapt, to roll with life while maintaining a broader perspective. "I don't let anything send me into a tailspin. I never have; it's not in my nature."

But while she might have intuited this strength before, now she knows it. **M**

"It was all a magical fantasy world, that kind of journey that you can get from a good book."

MANICURE: NETTIE DAVIS | PHOTO ASSISTANTS: TY WATKINS, BRIAN HIGBEE AND JASON MICHELSON | STYLISTS ASSISTANT: HAVLEY CHAPLIN



Black swirl-beaded fringe dress with illusion bodice and long sleeves, \$2,990, by Naeem Khan at Bergdorf Goodman. Odysse earrings, \$119, by Misaki at misakiusa.com. Maya studded black pointy-toe pumps, \$1,150, at Jimmy Choo.

Hair by Giannandrea at The Wall Group. Makeup by Christy Coleman at The Wall Group.