



THE LOOK:

Velvet jacket by
Talula Babaton;
vintage shirt,
stylist's own.

With a recent gold record in France and two Juno wins this year, everyone is taking notice of Leslie Feist. But it's apparent that her recent success hasn't gone to her head. Take her approach to interviews, for example. "I appreciate people asking [questions]," she says. "[But] I still have this hard time taking the person who is doing the interview as an individual. My instinct is to do that but, like, you are asking questions because it's an interview, not necessarily the ones you would be asking if we were having coffee."

After the release of her second album, *Let It Die*, last year, the 29-year-old former Calgarian has been touring continuously and garnering acclaim worldwide. Some may remember her fronting the punk band Placebo before moving to Toronto nearly a decade ago and playing with By Divine Right and Broken Social Scene.

She made the record in Paris, the city she now calls home even though she's been there for a total of one month in the course of the year.

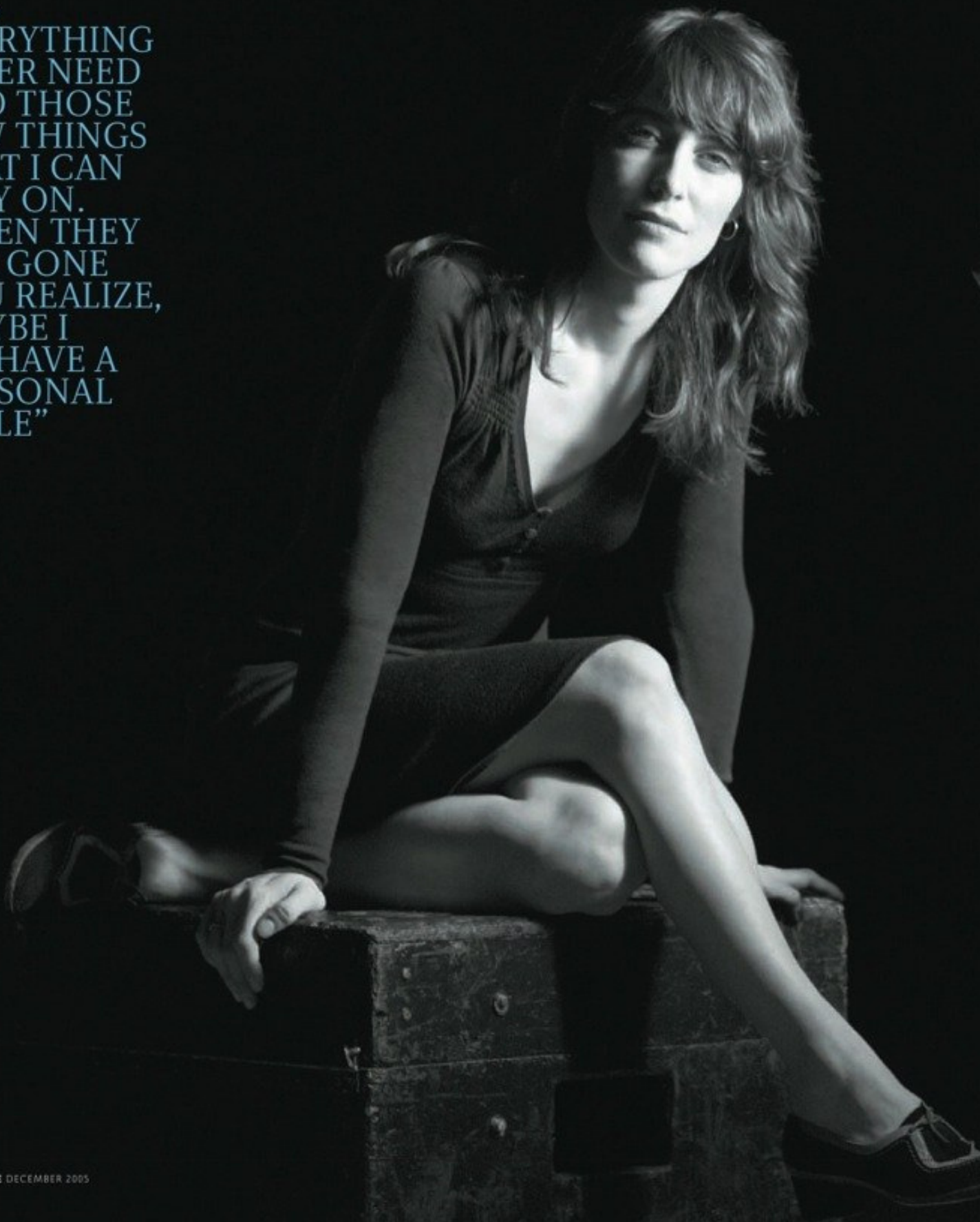
Q+A Feist: Singular Style

"I DON'T WEAR ANY [MAKEUP]; I'M SORT OF THAT 1950S PINCH-YOUR-CHEEKS-BEFORE-A-PHOTOGRAPH MENTALITY"

In conversation, Feist, as she is better known, comes across as a classy lady possessed of that air of sophistication prized in the time before the current explosion of pop divas. Every once in a while, she drops a French name with the aplomb (and accent) of a native Parisienne, giving me a brief glimpse of her romantic side. Her album's first single, *Mushaboom*, offers a longer look at this side of the singer. The tale of Feist's desire to live the simple life in a village outside Halifax, *Mushaboom* might just be the real Feist.

She will begin recording her new album in January, somewhere in Europe. "I am trying to find a little house with a studio in it, on a cliff somewhere, anywhere," she says, her voice trailing off as she pictures the scene and considers the possibilities. >>

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THE LOOK:

Dress by Vanessa Bruno; shoes belonged to Feist's grandmother.

How would you describe your personal style?

It depends on the day and it depends on whether or not an airline has lost my luggage. There have been a few times this year where I have been forced to dress completely in mall fashions, which is kind of hard to swallow.

My suitcase literally has everything I ever need and those few things that I can rely on. When they are gone you realize, Maybe I do have a personal style. I wouldn't know what to call it; I just know I miss it when it's not available to me.

Do you have a hair and makeup routine or is it *au naturel*?

It's sort of like tossing the dice every morning to see how the hair [is]. It's pretty much wake up and go, so I am always looking for the haircut that will let me do that ... I don't wear any [makeup]. I have a Body Shop-like berry-coloured lip gloss and I'm sort of that 1950s pinch-your-cheeks-before-a-photograph mentality.

Tell me about the pattern you sometimes draw around your neck before performing

It's just eyeliner pencil and sometimes markers, depending on what's around. ... It's just a sort of a decoration that feels less wealth-based [than jewelry]. I just love the way it looks—it's very temporary and it's the thrill of seeing ink on the skin.

You once said you learned to be more feminine living in Paris. Can you explain that?

You come to understand how these French women became the cliché that they are—clichés are based on something ... They take it to a whole other level—the whole femininity thing ... but I sort of rail against it because I can't win at the French game.

Why not?

Because there are 10-year-olds walking around who are more womanly than I am. Even from a tiny little age there is an awareness—it's just bred in them. Their moms are that way—they learn how to do things. I never had a big sister to teach me.

And even my mom, she's got her way that she does her womanly thing, but there never was a passing on of skills. I kind of like that I was free to be a tomboy.

What's a typical day for you in Paris?

Before my bike was stolen I would probably get on it and visit a friend who lives near Bastille and we would go walk her baby along the Canal St. Martin. I also found a couple of parks within 15 minutes of my house where you can actually walk on the grass—in a lot of parks in France you can't because they are just too couture. I might go buy some fish and vegetables and cook a nice meal—it's just really kind of "vacationish."

Have you shopped for clothes in Paris?

I guess I must have, but what I really love is Salvation Army and Value Village. I love the thrill of the chase, not knowing if you are gonna find something really exactly perfect ... I kind of go shopping in my storage space in Toronto when I go back. It's like going shopping but not having to spend money.

How would you describe Calgary's style?

Gore-Tex, denim [laughs].

And fleece?

Yeah, I would add fleece in there and what are those shoes called that are so comfortable that all the older people wear?

Birkenstocks?

No—the walking shoes, I can picture them but—oh Texas.

With socks?

Yeah, Texas with socks and everything in between [laughs].

What is the most expensive item you've ever bought?

Probably good boots. I was in Bologna in Italy and I bought really beautiful black leather [ones] I thought would last me for 10 years. But the soles are so thin that within a week they'd almost worn completely through. I suppose Italian leather boots are not meant to be worn as much as I do and in the way I wear my boots. >>

And the least expensive?

I was just on Hornby Island, and they have this amazing thing there: the Free Store. People take anything they don't want anymore and leave it there and people can go and take anything they want. It's sort of a recycling depot, but everyone brings really well-cared-for things. So the least I spent was nothing—I think I got a T-shirt.

Early in your career you often played the Republik and the Night Gallery. How do you feel about the fact that both are now closed?

It's sort of sad to think that I will never be able to walk into those rooms and just sort of reabsorb all the time I spent there. But [if I did] I would just realize that everything has its time. If something new has popped out with fresh energy that occupies the same kind of space that the Night Gallery did, [then] I think it's best that something be let die, no pun intended.

You recently licensed one of your songs to Lacoste for use in an ad campaign. Do you know what the commercial is going to look like?

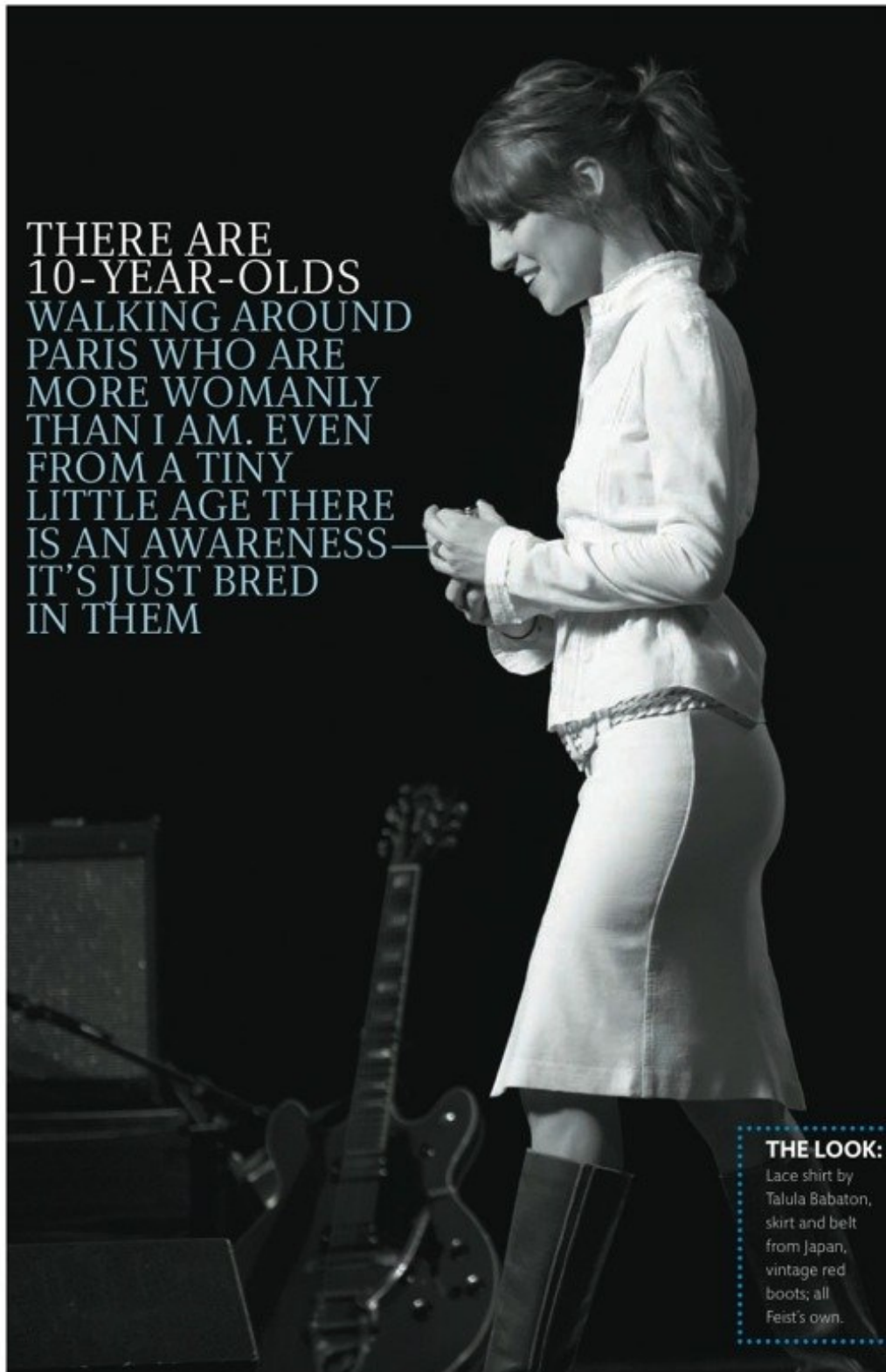
Yeah, there is a man playing with the ocean—sort of jumping around and the ocean keeps on trying to spray him, but he keeps on avoiding it. I really liked the sentiment of this man who is just kind of being dorky. Besides that, I didn't think too hard about it. I probably should have but I thought, This isn't McDonald's or Burger King or Coca-Cola, and it's an opportunity for me to continue music, really, because if you go broke, the whole thing falls apart.

McDonald's wanted your music too, right?

Yeah, McDonald's and Kentucky Fried Chicken. Kentucky Fried Chicken wanted *Mushaboom* for some weird campaign that they are doing opening their first branches in China. There is no way on earth. Like of all the things that could be influencing China when they open to the west—and reluctantly like a little oyster—it should not be Kentucky Fried Chicken.

What is your favourite thing about Calgary?

Well, what I really loved is the place my mom chose for us to experience Calgary, which was not quite in the middle of downtown but not in the burbs at all. It was right along the river—you can see downtown in the distance—you know along Memorial Drive



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THE LOOK:

Lace shirt by Talula Babaton, skirt and belt from Japan, vintage red boots; all Feist's own.

there. It was really ideal because we felt like the city was available to us; we weren't stuck an hour outside wherever anything interesting is happening in the beige expanse of the suburbs. Calgary is a really special place—of course, when I was 20 and left I couldn't wait to get out, but now I get it.

What will you be wearing in 20 years?

I don't know what strange direction my life

and the world will take by then. Hopefully not a gas mask and some kind of bio-containment suit.

Life philosophy?

I can't share that [laughs]—not in a magazine. That's my cheeky way to say I don't know. **F**

STYLED BY EMMA GREENSTREET
HAIR BY DANA MCKINNON, ARTISTS WITHIN
MAKEUP BY TARA ANAND, ARTISTS WITHIN