

the new girl

She's a familiar face in Thailand, where she's starred in numerous commercials, TV dramas and music videos. Now, Taya Rogers is gearing up for fame in Singapore as the newest VJ to be signed with MTV Asia.

If you haven't already seen Taya Rogers on TV, you soon will. The most recent addition to MTV Asia's stable of VJs, the 22-year-old American-Thai stunner has been lighting up small screens since she started recording for the station just a few weeks ago (Taya also guest-hosted a handful of shows for MTV Asia last year). Talking to Taya, it's not hard to see why she was picked for the job. Besides her striking good looks, she is incredibly smart (she recently graduated with honours in communications and marketing), witty, friendly, and, oh yeah, extremely funny too. She's also highly spirited and full of energy — two qualities that really come across when she starts working it for the camera. It's obvious Taya loves what she does, and she hopes to continue doing it for a long time to come. "I hope people like me enough to want to keep seeing more of me," she says. Well, she can bet on that. She's been approached by several fans already, and the girl's only just getting started!

By Sasha Gonzales
Photography Veronica Tay

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17: Let's talk about your background. Where were you born and what's your family like?

TR: I was born in Hermosa Beach in Southern California, and that's where I grew up. I'm an only child. My mother is Thai-Chinese and my dad is American-Caucasian, so I was raised in a bicultural home. My mum went to the US for college, and that's how she met my dad. Then when I was eight, we moved to Thailand. We lived there till I was 15, then I returned to the US to finish high school and go to college.

17: Where are your parents now?

TR: My mum lives in Indonesia now, and my dad spends half the year in California, and the other half in Thailand, for work. We're a pretty global family.

17: What was the college experience like for you?

TR: Oh, I loved college! I mean, I'm a bit of a nerd, but I kind of had fun too, you know? I moved into an apartment with friends and it was like a summer party every night. *(Laughs)* It was nice having my own space. I went to Loyola Marymount University, which is on a hill by the beach. You can see the Hollywood sign and the Hollywood Hills area from one side, and the ocean from the other. So yeah, every day at college was great!

17: How did you get this job with MTV?

TR: I got news about the audition through Utt (veteran MTV VJ), whom I met while working in Thailand. I was under his talent/modelling agency called Seven95ive. He told me MTV might be looking for a new VJ, and asked me if I would be interested. Well, of course I was, right? As it turned out, I finished college in May last year and returned to Thailand for six months to do a drama. While I was there, I flew to Singapore for the audition, and things kind of just fell into place after that.

17: You'll be based in Singapore now. How do you think you'll take to living here?

TR: I'm so excited! I'm actually still trying to find my way around the city — it's not easy because I don't know where things are. So right now, I'm just wandering around, trying to find out what's what. I've never lived in Singapore for longer than five days! I'm looking for an apartment now, actually.

17: Have you made a lot of friends yet?

TR: I don't know anyone here, except Utt and maybe two other people who are not MTV-affiliated. *(Laughs)*

17: You started out as a model, right? How did you get into it?

TR: That's right. Well, when I was 12, a talent scout approached me when I was at the beach in Thailand with my parents. When I first started, I didn't book a lot of jobs and I got really, really discouraged. Then something happened, and suddenly I was getting all these bookings. I landed a couple of commercials, and later, a music video, and then a movie. I also co-hosted a talk show for two-and-a-half years. And I've done a lot of print work.

17: So you enjoyed modelling and acting right away?

TR: I was so shy when I started. I hated being in front of the camera. But at the same time, I wanted to go on stage and act and model. So initially, when that talent scout approached me, I said no. But then my mum sat me down and encouraged me to try it. She said she didn't want me to not pursue my dreams because I was shy. She also told me, "If you try it and don't like it, don't do it anymore". And now, I don't want to stop because I'm having so much fun!

17: Can you imagine doing this for a long time?

TR: Hopefully, yeah! This is still very new to me because VJ-ing is the only thing in the industry that I haven't done until now. But I have good mentors to learn from, like Denise (Keller) and Utt.

17: When you were younger, did you have problems juggling work and school?

TR: Not really, because I usually worked on weekends and during the summer holidays. But I was also always on set with my books and homework. My dad was so strict, you know? He told me that if I didn't do well at school, I couldn't model anymore. I was like, why is he making this so hard for me? But looking back, I'm glad he was so strict.

17: What kind of music do you like?

TR: My iPod is full of everything, from punk rock to hip-hop! My parents raised me on reggae and rock 'n' roll. I also listen to '80s stuff like Madonna, Paula Abdul, all the boy bands... Oh, and I like classical music, too. I used to listen to that while studying.

17: How do you spend your free time?

TR: I DJ too, so right now I'm waiting for my turntable to arrive from the US. That's a great time-killer. I love messing with it and learning new tricks. I'm also a big bookworm. I *love* books — both giving and receiving them. Last year, I read 26 books in six months! I'm also into sports. When I was younger, I did track, basketball, rollerblade hockey, and softball. My dad raised me on a lot of sports. I think he wanted a son! *(Laughs)*

17: Are you into fashion too?

TR: Oh yeah, definitely. I love shopping, fashion magazines and photography. Fashion affects everybody, you know? My style is really based on my mood, but no matter what, I always make sure I'm comfortable.

17: How do you think you'll cope with fame once more and more people start seeing you on TV?

TR: I'm not scared about people recognising me. I mean, more than anything right now, it would be great if people recognised me because I don't know anybody here! *(Laughs)* So come up and talk to me — that would be awesome, because I need to make new friends. I was told that Singaporeans are very friendly, so I'm not worried at all.

17: And what about the downside of fame?

TR: People tell me to be careful about what I do, but honestly, I'm not worried. I was raised well. I don't get drunk, I don't do drugs, and I'm not gonna show up doing some topless dance on the table or anything.

17: I'm sure our readers want to know — are you single now?

TR: Yes!

17: What do you look for in a guy?

TR: He has to be funny, understanding, smart, and open-minded. I definitely can't be with someone close-minded or arrogant. He should also know how to communicate with me. He shouldn't just be my boyfriend, but my best friend too.

17: What can you say to girls who dream of making it big?

TR: Well, if you want something bad enough, you'll find you have the passion for it. And that passion will keep you driven. But be smart about it, you know, and surround yourself with good, supportive, positive people. And work hard, above everything else. You *have* to put in the effort.

“ If you want something bad enough, you'll find you have the passion for it. ”



DID YOU KNOW?
Taya starred in Boys Like Girls' *The Great Escape* music video. "It was so much fun," she says. "We filmed for three days... It was pretty crazy!"

CATCH TAYA ON MTV (STARHUB CHANNEL 20) ON THE FOLLOWING SHOWS:

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