

MISS UNIVERSE

*From supermodel to action hero—can nothing stop Milla Jovovich's rise to the top? Terena Eisner tracks down this rising star and finds an earth-mother nestled in a celestial space suit.
Photographed by Simon Upton. Styled by Kenneth Goh*

Headpiece: Lucite and leather boots,
Berberry Prorsum, Metal
to metal, Manuel Albarran,
sequined Lycra tights,
Costume Dept. (Left Hand)
Lucite diamond-cut bangles,
Lucite multi-strap cuffs,
Sequin. (Right Hand) Lucite
and silver oval bangle,
Sequin, Lucite large cuff,
Gara Croninger

“

Her name is Meee-ia, not Milla as in the beer”, offered Chris, Milla Jovovich’s agent. Oh, sorry, we didn’t know that—but Milla doesn’t seem to mind. She turns up on the dot at 10.30am in her SUV. A quick introduction to the crew and immediately gets down to her hair and make-up as she needs to leave by 4pm sharp. Milla means business, but not in a nasty, don’t-bother-me-with-problems kind of way. We learn later that her brusque manner had little to do with moods, but rather with her granny falling ill the night before. “She’s built like a horse—she’s so strong,” says Milla in her drawn out American accent. “She just won’t go to sleep!” It’s a concern, but not enough for the 34-year old screen veteran to stop the shoot.

The Soviet-born beauty might be Russian by birth—the piercing green-blue eyes, incredible bone structure and alabaster skin could only come from Eastern Bloc stock—but apart from her parentage, she is all American. She is a model, an actress, a musician and designer—she is blessed, having achieved so much at a relatively young age. Since she first starred as Alice in the *Resident Evil* franchise nearly 10 years ago, Milla continues her reign as one of Hollywood’s biggest female action stars. Whether she is saving the world from destruction in the *Fifth Element* or starring in ad campaigns, Milla exudes a rare combination of toughness and grace—it is what attracted the world’s top photographers and designers to book her at age 11, when she burst into the modeling scene. She was the youngest model to grace the cover of a US fashion magazine. Since then she has been featured on numerous magazine covers and appeared in campaigns for L’Oreal, Armani, Prada, Donna Karan, Calvin Klein, Christian Dior and Versace.

She has an innate sense of style and her eclectic outfits always stand out on the red carpet. “My personal style changes hour by hour, day by day. It depends on how I’m feeling. Currently, I’m also into this really incredible young man who designs Loha Vete—he makes jeans and T-shirts with embroidery and stitches poems and pictures onto the clothes.” She is a collector of vintage clothing and owns ‘40s vintage hats and eclectic ‘80s belts. “I’ve met some amazing people in the industry and have been exposed to so many areas in the art world that I like to bring that into my style.” Her current must-have items are basics. “I’ve been living in opaque black tights lately. I can wear them with shorts and a T-shirt and accessorise with a scarf, jewellery and some rad jacket.”

Back to the shoot—which was conceptualised to be part space cadet, part diner waitress, part inter-galactic warrior. It’s a challenging shoot, but Milla loves to push boundaries. When asked to don a wig for the shoot, Milla said, “It’s very Lady Gaga-esque. Love it! It’s really conceptual and I enjoy working on these types of shoots.” The Burberry Prorsum outfits worked like a charm on her—the soft metallics and satin glazes perfectly suited her pale

skin and the structured poses worked well with the constructed shoulders and military suitings. Milla came alive in front of the camera—her steely gaze got harder and her poses fiercer. As fashion director Kenneth Goh said, “I don’t have to do a thing—she is pretty amazing!” Milla delivered 110 per cent—stopping for just a nano-second to wave and flash a smile at the paparazzi across the street. “You can’t run from these paps. So, I give them their shot and they’ll leave us alone.”

It is rare that a model successfully transitions onto the big screen and rarer still to achieve longevity as an actress—yet it appears that Milla was destined to become a star. Her family defected from the Soviet Union when she was five, but her parents split up shortly after they moved to Los Angeles. Milla credits her mother, Galina, for driving her career. Galina, an actress in Russia, worked as a house-cleaner in America to send Milla to acting and music classes. At 13, she starred in her first feature film and, two years later, in the 1991 sequel, *Return to the Blue Lagoon*. Her teenage years were spent modelling and acting in films such as *Kuffs* and *Dazed and Confused*. She also released a music album, *The Divine Comedy*, in 1994. Her soulful voice and poignant lyrics drew praise, but music took a backseat to acting after her role in Luc Besson’s *The Fifth Element*. However, Milla felt she hit her stride with acting when she was older. “I really found myself in my

early 20s as an actor. Growing up, I met people who inspired me to bring truth to parts.”

Besson, the writer and director of *The Fifth Element*, might have been one of the inspirations. The two wed shortly after filming. (It was actually Milla’s second marriage—her first was at the age of 16 to co-star Shaun Andrew from *Dazed and Confused*. The marriage was annulled since her mother strongly disapproved.) Besson then cast her as Joan of Arc in the 1999 film, *The Messenger: The Story of Joan*

of Arc. The pair divorced amicably after 16 months of marriage following the filming. Milla then acted in a string of independent films, including *Zoolander*, *The Claim*, and *The Million Dollar Hotel*.

It is her recent role, as mother to her two-year-old-daughter, Ever, that has proven to be the most challenging. “You’ve got a human being that you are trying to bring up in the best way possible. My number one concern is to be the best mom I can be and still retain myself throughout it all,” she says. Milla married filmmaker Paul W S Anderson, Ever’s father, last year. It was on the sets of *Resident Evil* that she met Anderson. Based on the computer game of the same title, the *Resident Evil* films have been huge Box Office hits, with the fourth installment slated for release next year. Although she never set out to become an action star, Milla was always attracted to action heroes. “I grew up watching *Thundercats*. I’m fascinated with people who have control over their bodies and can do these incredible stunts,” she laughs.

So, what does the self-confessed workaholic do in her spare time? “When I have time off from filming, either I’m with my baby or hanging out with my friends. I’m not the type to go to lunch and get my nails done.” Future plans? “I definitely want to record another album. I love the recording process and I’m very happy when I’m singing and writing.” ■

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Unit tank top; military webbing belt; stretch satin and leather boots, Burberry Prorsum. Pewter leather head harness; pewter shoulder harness; Zana Bayne. Pewter high-waisted lamé leggings, American Apparel. Gunmetal scaled cuff, Alexis Bittar. Black and gold polyester resin cuff, Cara Croninger. Peruvian bone cuffs, V Vintage. Taupe oval Lucite ring, Luc Kieffer. Lucite canteen, Ragg Mopp Vintage

Duchess satin reef knot trench dress; leather belt, Burberry Prorsum. Black multi-panelled tights, Brian Lichtenberg. Metal cut-out helmet, Manuel Albarran. Silver, vinyl and glass choker, and i. Lucite ring; lucite earrings, Vibe Harslof



Duchess satin layered loop-knot trench dress; stretch satin and leather boots, Burberry Prorsum. Gold fish-scale brooch (on hair), Alexis Bittar. Pink acetate Debbie spectacles, Mykita. Vinyl and glass choker, and i. Sequinned Lycra tights, Costume Dept. (Left Hand) Gold double bangle; gold cuff with beads; gold multi-plate ring, Laruicci. (Right Hand) Two-tiered spherical bangle; gold large stone bracelet; gold contoured bangle, R.J. Graziano. Gold bubble cocktail ring, Alexis Bittar. OPOSITE PAGE: Duchess satin dress with pleated sleeves; leather platform sandals, Burberry Prorsum. Metal studded headband; metal armour; metal shin guard, Manuel Albarran. Silver cuff with beads, Laruicci. Silver bow-tie cuff, Alexis Bittar. Cotton socks, We Love Colors



SHAKES

FOUNTAIN
SERVICE

Wool and knit cardigans;
pleated silk chiffon skirt,
Burberry Prorsum. Metal
headpiece with diamonds,
and ivory Isabel spectacles,
Mykita. Metal shoulder
harness, Laurel Luxe. Square
Lucite bead necklace, Sequin.
(Left Hand) Metal cut-out
bangles, and J. Contoured
Lucite bangle; faceted Lucite
bangle; flat Lucite bangle;
Cara Croninger. (Right Hand)
Metal cut-out bangles, and J.
Contoured Lucite bangles;
diamond-cut bangle with silver
threading detail, R.J. Graziano

See Buylines for details

Hair: Keiko Hamaguchi/
Celestine Agency
Make-up: Melanie Inglessis/
The Magnet Agency
using L'Oréal
Managers: Lisa Jachens/
Cloudier Agency
First photography assistant:
Tarrk Richards
Second photography
assistant: James Acomb
Digital technician: Chris Nicols
Digital imaging:
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