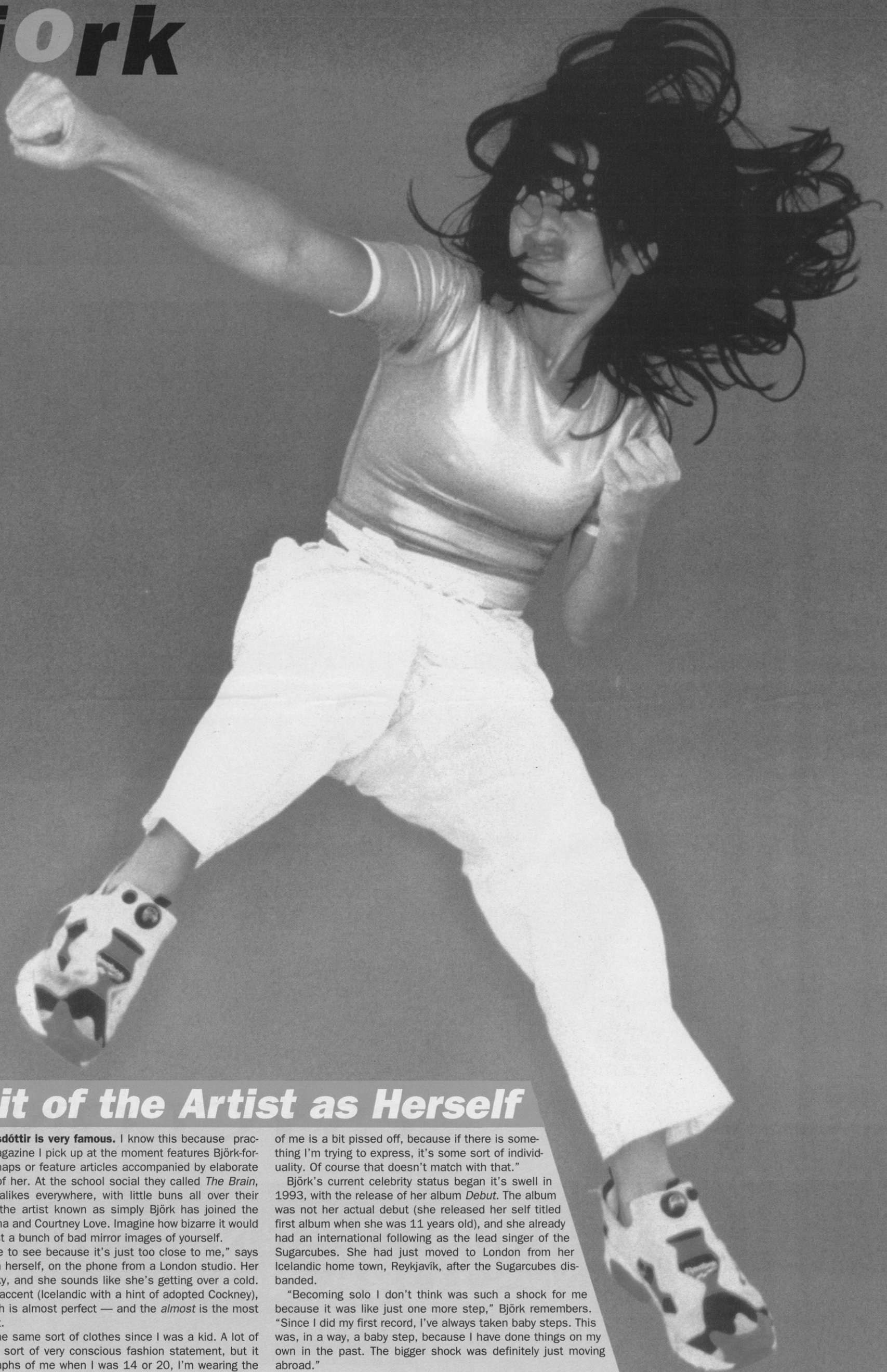


Björk



Portrait of the Artist as Herself

Björk Guðmundsdóttir is very famous. I know this because practically every magazine I pick up at the moment features Björk-for-Björk's-sake snaps or feature articles accompanied by elaborate photo shoots of her. At the school social they called *The Brain*, there were little Björk-alikes everywhere, with little buns all over their heads. Yes, it's true, the artist known as simply Björk has joined the cloned ranks of Madonna and Courtney Love. Imagine how bizarre it would be to go dancing amidst a bunch of bad mirror images of yourself.

"It's very hard for me to see because it's just too close to me," says the Icelandic pixie-vixen herself, on the phone from a London studio. Her voice is quiet and husky, and she sounds like she's getting over a cold. Despite her distinctive accent (Icelandic with a hint of adopted Cockney), her command of English is almost perfect — and the *almost* is the most bewitching part about it.

"I've been wearing the same sort of clothes since I was a kid. A lot of people think it's some sort of very conscious fashion statement, but it isn't. You see photographs of me when I was 14 or 20, I'm wearing the same sort of things. It just sprung from my mother always allow me to wear whatever I want, and me loving colours and wanting still things to be comfortable.

"This hair-do came because I was in karate, and having two buns, like I used to, it didn't work because you were doing a lot of exercises with your head. Having little ones was very practical.

"Half of me is very honoured that people are like this, but the other half

of me is a bit pissed off, because if there is something I'm trying to express, it's some sort of individuality. Of course that doesn't match with that."

Björk's current celebrity status began its swell in 1993, with the release of her album *Debut*. The album was not her actual debut (she released her self titled first album when she was 11 years old), and she already had an international following as the lead singer of the Sugarcubes. She had just moved to London from her Icelandic home town, Reykjavík, after the Sugarcubes disbanded.

"Becoming solo I don't think was such a shock for me because it was like just one more step," Björk remembers. "Since I did my first record, I've always taken baby steps. This was, in a way, a baby step, because I have done things on my own in the past. The bigger shock was definitely just moving abroad."

She describes England and Iceland as being "like black and white".

"Iceland is quiet, full of nature. It's got completely different people, very energetic, very over emotional people, very happy, very sad, all these things. Iceland was full of myths. It is only about 50 years ago that we became independent. We were a colony before that, and almost lived in the Middle Ages. People were still living in mud houses