

# THE BOULEVARD

Long Island's Premier Celebrity, Lifestyle and Variety Publication

September 2010

IN SOHO WITH  
**SELITA  
EBANKS**

KELLY RUTHERFORD  
KELLY WEARSTLER  
SUSIE ESSMAN  
STACEY BENDET  
BRIAN ATWOOD



**SELITA  
EBANKS**  
BEAUTIFUL  
FROM THE INSIDE OUT

/ By **Ruth Bashinsky** / Photography By **Shaun Mader**  
for **PATRICK MCMULLAN COMPANY**

/ Makeup By **Makeup By Janeiro** for **MAC PRO** at **Judy Casey, Inc.**  
/ Hair Styling By **Dawn O'Neill** for **nuBest Salon & Spa**



**ALICE + OLIVIA** Voula  
Ornate Sequin Dress,  
\$597; **BRIAN ATWOOD**  
Eastwood in Bronze Suede  
(seen on the cover), \$1260,  
available at Jeffrey, N.Y.  
**RON RIZZO** Sterling Silver  
& Garnet Pearlized Glass  
Bead Ring, \$400; Sterling  
Silver Citrine & Orange  
Sapphire Flower Leather  
Toggle Bracelet, \$250;  
Smoky Topaz 14KT &  
Sterling Silver Ring, \$1095;  
150 Total Carat Weight  
Smoky Topaz Sterling  
Silver Necklace, \$1700;  
Sierra Sterling Silver  
Citrine & Pearlized Glass  
Bead Drop Earrings, \$475

## PROFILE **SELITA EBANKS**



**ALICE + OLIVIA** Marilyn Faux Fur Shawl Collar Coat, \$330; **VINCE** Under Everything Black Camisole (worn as dress), \$95, [www.bloomingdales.com](http://www.bloomingdales.com); **BRIAN ATWOOD** Super Charged Python Black & White Booties, \$1105, available at Elyse Walker, Los Angeles, CA; **RON RIZZO** 18KT Gold Elliptical Hoop with Black Onyx, \$1200; Athena 18KT & Oxidized Sterling Silver Mesh Bracelet, \$2800; Onyx & Black Diamond Silver Ring, \$995

When I got the assignment to interview Selita Ebanks, one of the world's most beautiful models, I looked in the mirror and thought, *Ok ... it may be too late for cosmetic surgery, but I really need to start my diet NOW!!!* Unfortunately, I never did lose any weight, but the interview went great.

Ebanks, an exotic beauty of Jamaican, Caymanian, Irish, Indian and African descent (her father is Jamaican and her mother Caymanian) has been captured on the fashion runway and in countless print ads – *Maxim*, *Esquire*, *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue* – showing off some of her best assets – delicate features and legs that just don't quit. Discovered at Six Flags Great Adventure at age 17, Ebanks has been part of some of the foremost fashion campaigns including Ralph Lauren, Tommy Hilfiger, Abercrombie & Fitch and Levi's. And up until last year, she was one of the stunning models and Angels that made up the Victoria's Secret family. In 2009, she decided to leave Victoria's Secret to pursue other endeavors.

Out on the West Coast to attend a party for her friend Serena Williams, Ebanks took time to chat with *The Boulevard* about her career, her charities, what she holds dear, her secret weapon for staying gorgeous, and what runs through her mind before she steps onto the fashion runway wearing all those fabulous and frilly lace undies. "Victoria's Secret is not a normal fashion show. They don't want girls who have no personality. You want to be sexy and sophisticated. You want to have fun and want to be

almost empowering to other women and let them know, 'It is okay, girl. Get out there on that runway and have a great time.' All that is going through my head are positive thoughts. I am telling myself that I am fierce, that this is my moment and [that] I have to give these people a show."

No arguments here. Ebanks knows how to work it, but the Caribbean beauty also reveals a side to her that any woman can relate to. "The [time] leading up to the [Victoria's Secret] show is more scary because you know that, okay, in approximately two weeks there will be 10 million people looking at the stretch marks on my a\*\*," she says, laughing. However, Ebanks is not the type of model to starve herself or go on any wacky diets. She enjoys her food, particularly fried chicken, collard greens, and mac and cheese, but is disciplined when she needs to be. "I am a foodie. I love to cook and try new dishes, but like most women, I know there are consequences in indulging. Everything is okay in moderation."

At 27, Ebanks admits she has never had to work at her figure but as she gets closer to her 30s, she is learning to take better care of her health. "As I get older, gravity is coming in. Now I am just concentrating on eating healthier and getting daily exercise ... being toned – not so much losing or maintaining a certain weight – just making sure everything is where it is supposed to be."

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Growing up in the Cayman Islands with seven brothers, the athletic Ebanks said she was so skinny that she would often get teased. “Women in the Caribbean are supposed to be voluptuous and curvy. They definitely celebrate that and growing up skinny was really hard.”

Who’s laughing now? Today, Ebanks is one of the most sought-after models in the industry. In 2007, she was chosen as one of *People Magazine’s* Most Beautiful People. And in 2009 was listed by *Forbes Magazine* at #13 as the highest paid black model.

It is not only her outer beauty that gets noticed but her inner beauty as well. Born at Manhattan’s Bellevue Hospital, Ebanks spent much of her childhood in the Grand Cayman Islands, where she was raised by different organizations, while her mother, who was homeless at the time, was struggling. When she was 6 years old, Ebanks spent a short time in foster care before her grandmother took her and her seven siblings in. At 16, when she returned to the States, Ebanks wanted to help those who were less fortunate and became a mentor for the Seaman’s Society of Staten Island, working with girls who were pregnant and HIV-infected. “My mother always raised us to know the difference and to appreciate everything in life and having that childhood, I always gravitated toward being philanthropic. It is part of my life to give back, whether it is just a man on the street asking for a dollar or helping build a school in Sierra Leone, which is what I recently did.”

Today, Ebanks is on the board of New Yorkers for Children, an organization that helps to rehabilitate and create sustainable lives for children coming out of the foster care system. Having gone through a similar experience, Ebanks’ goal is to reach out to the thousands of young people in foster care. “It wasn’t a great experience being in foster care and being taken away from your family. So for me it is not only giving money, but dedicating my time and my energy. Sitting down with these young people and letting them know that they can be successful regardless of their past.”

Despite the hardships she encountered in her younger days, Ebanks remains close with her parents, whom she describes as extremely supportive. “They are overly proud at moments. Sometimes I will be like, ‘Okay guys, you are embarrassing me. I am a grown woman now.’”

Another group she contributes her time to is Free Arts, an organization that introduces inner-city kids to the arts. She also formed the Women’s Coalition for Empowerment and Opportunity (WCEO) after a trip to Sierra Leone in 2008. The organization helps to support women’s educational and professional programs in the civil war-torn African nation. And back in the Cayman Islands, she started a mentoring program called the Stardom Youth Foundation, providing career guidance for teenagers. In May, Ebanks appeared on *Celebrity Apprentice* to help raise awareness and funds for WCEO. While on the show she won \$20,000 and hopes to use that money to open a birthing center for the women of Sierra Leone. “I am very proud. Sierra Leone and South Asia have the highest child mortality rate in the world. A woman dies every nine seconds in childbirth and one child in four, before the age of 5, dies. It is really sad. I hope to lower that statistic.”

Smart and level headed, Ebanks’ “can-do” attitude is inspiring and empowering to other young girls who want to achieve their dreams. “I always tell young ladies never to give up their dreams. Always stay positive and stay focused. When an opportunity comes knocking, you always have to be ready.”

Ready, indeed. Ten years into the modeling business and Ebanks is already looking ahead. Some of her long-term goals include continuing her education, writing a book and producing/hosting her own television show. “Modeling will always be a part of me but there are endless opportunities out there for me and I feel like I want to accomplish all of them. But I also have a few things I need to do in the modeling game.”

Watch out, Oprah ... watch out, Tyra ... Selita Ebanks is just warming up. ■

### **SELITA SHARES HER TOP THREE BEAUTY SECRETS:**

1. SPF definitely. Always protect yourself from the sun.
2. Drink lots of water because you moisturize from the inside out.
3. Mascara, ChapStick and a little blush can go a long way.