

Paloma Faith as a beautiful corpse in...

# HOLLYWOOD MURDERS

## Becoming Paloma Faith

Rory Mackie

There's an old boy named John who drinks in The Royal Sovereign every day. A soft-spoken gentleman, he was a policeman way back when, and in the Navy too. Stationed in Portsmouth he remembers a time when the uniform would get you through the turnstiles at Fratton Park. Not that he's overly keen on football but as he says, "It was a free day out." There's a few like him left down Hackney way, propping up the bar at the local, day-in day-out for thirty years or more, hiding from the wife and watching the world go by. John's seen The Sovereign change ownership more times than he can remember, noted the influx of punks and 'trendies' over the last couple of years, and for the most part, put up with it with good grace and without comment.

It's a bright Sunday afternoon and John is the only customer at the bar when Paloma Faith walks in. She looks immaculate of course, hair piled up into a 1940s 'do and dressed to kill. A forces sweetheart dolled up in vintage finery. We find a table by the window and sipping a cranberry juice she looks up expectantly.

"How do you want to do this?" she says

"Let's start at the very beginning," say I.

So we do.

Paloma Faith is 26, tiny, and possibly the finest singer in London. She writes and performs with her band The Unfaithfuls and is currently kicking up a storm in clubland with shows that mix Jazz and Blues with a punk attitude and beautiful clothes. Critics are, predictably, frothing at the mouth and she's already turned down at least one major label deal on the grounds that it didn't offer full artistic control.

It's rare these days to find a musician with this strong a sense of self-worth, who seems to have sprung fully-formed from nowhere and made such an impact so quickly. So where does it begin? How do you go from being a self-confessed "weird gremlin from Hackney," to becoming Paloma Faith?

"From what I know of my dad he was a bit of a fantasist. He lied his way into university at fifteen, for instance. And my mum was a sixties free-thinker, she encouraged me to be as imaginative as possible. As a kid, when we played together, I'd always create these little worlds in my head, populate them with characters. I was a restaurant manager one day, in charge of an airport the next."

Musically Paloma has continued to create her own little world. Watching her on stage is to be transported. She is larger than life, with a voice to match; a torch singer from a lost era, clothed in faded glamour and the darkest, darkest noir.

"I was brought up on Jazz and sixties Soul and I loved the drama inherent in those records. Despite their vulnerability the women who sang those songs seemed so strong to me. They reminded me of the women in my family, my earliest heroines. And I adored





Hollywood film-stars. Isabella Rossellini I thought was so sexy; beautiful in an unconventional way. I was allowed to watch *Twin Peaks* when I was little and I loved all that eerie, otherworldly stuff."

This love of the darker side of life has clearly influenced Paloma's distinctive visual style. She's collected vintage clothes from every decade of the twentieth century and alongside her admiration for twenties flappers, forties pin-ups and sixties modettes is a well rounded understanding of the transgressive and the macabre.

"There's something about death as a metaphor, the many little deaths you experience throughout your life that I'm intrigued by. George Bataille talks a lot about suffering through passion, the idea that death can even be beautiful. With people like Billie Holliday, Nina Simone, Peggy Lee—you get the sense that they die a little inside every time something bad happens to them. With these photographs I wanted to explore that idea further. Each picture is the recreation of a famous Hollywood murder from a specific decade, something that fit in with a lot of the things that fascinate me. I particularly wanted to work with Pavla Kopečna too; she's a long time collaborator and really seems to get what I'm about. I try to only work with people who inspire me."

With this Paloma smiles and stands up, explaining she's late for a lunch-date, "eating dim-sum with a friend." She heads off into the sunshine and at the next table John finishes up his beer and ambles over.

"Who was that attractive young lady I saw you talking to?" he asks.



"That was Paloma Faith," I say, "I was interviewing her for a magazine. She's a singer."

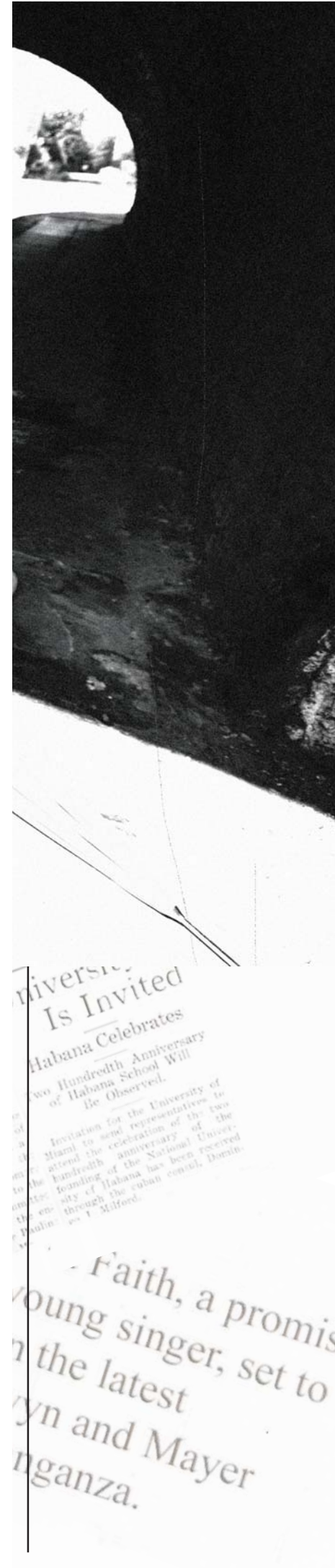
"Oh yeah? Famous is she?"

"Going to be."

And then I explain to John that actually, he'd probably really like what she does. How she loves all those divas that he's got a soft spot for. Ella, Nina, Bessie. How amazing her voice is and how she surrounds herself with this old-time glamour.

John looks impressed for once, "Paloma Faith, eh? I'll keep an eye out for her. She sounds a bit special."

Couldn't have put it better myself John.



















# THE END

Paloma Faith  
Pavla Kopečna

as herself & styling  
Director of Photography

[www.myspace.com/palomafaith](http://www.myspace.com/palomafaith)

[www.pavlunka.com](http://www.pavlunka.com)

Pavla Kopečna will be exhibiting her 'Hollywood Murders' photographs from 3 November—1 December  
at the Tender Pixel Gallery, 10 Cecil Court, London WC2N 4HE [www.tenderpixel.com](http://www.tenderpixel.com)