



Georgia Frost, model, age 16, photographed by Kai Z Feng

The next generation

The rising stars of 2007 in a special Talent Issue

Plus **Will Self** on Second Life Mark Hix's New Year's Eve feast **Win** a case of champagne in our wine quiz

The next big things

Who will be the bright young stars of 2007? Over the next 14 pages, our experts introduce the hottest new talents from the worlds of art, music, books, fashion, food, politics and sport

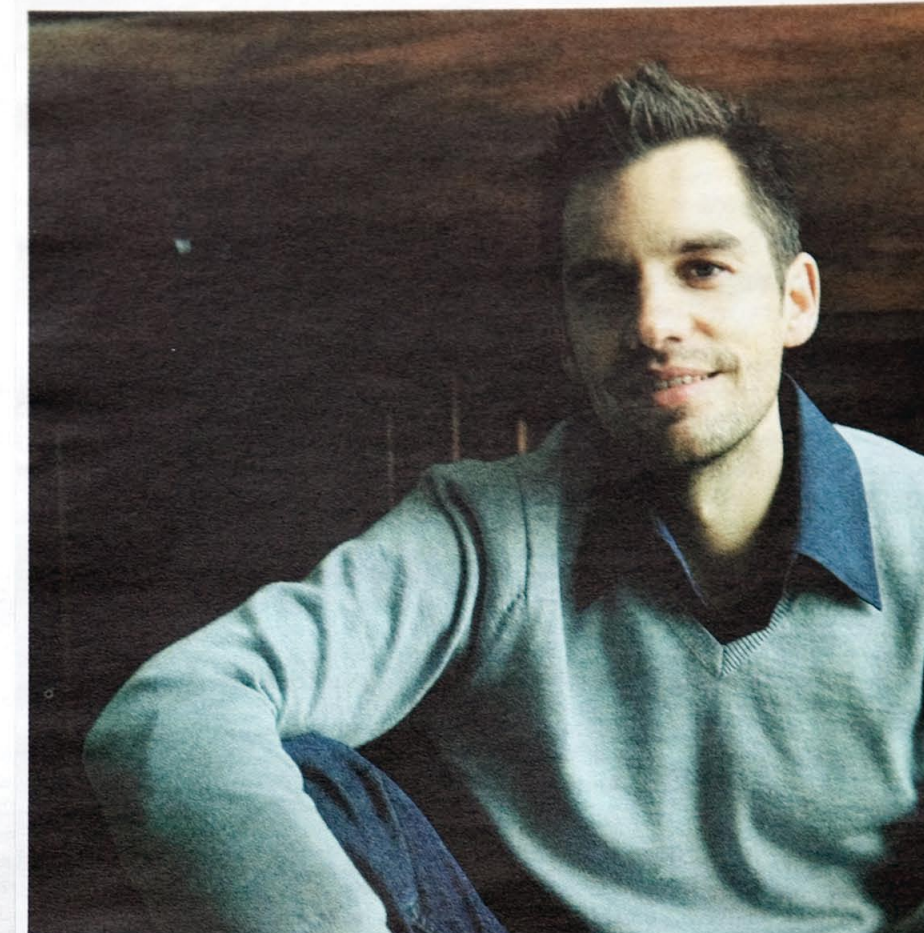
The pop star Mika

Mika is that rare thing – a singer-songwriter with charisma *and* talent. Add to that a penchant for grandiose Technicolor pop and you have a proper star-in-waiting. The son of a Lebanese father and an American mother, Mika was born in Beirut in the mid-Eighties and grew up listening to everything from folk to flamenco. A series of traumatic childhood experiences, including the kidnapping of his father at the American embassy in Kuwait in 1993, did nothing to dampen his enthusiasm for singing and performing. When he was nine the family relocated to Paris and then to London where, under the tutelage of a Russian voice coach, Mika began to hone his craft. At 11, he made his stage debut in Richard Strauss's *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. This was followed by a stint at the Royal

College of Music, though he dropped out deciding he was better suited to pop.

There was a false start with a record company who wanted to turn Mika into the next Craig David. Undeterred, he pursued his signature sound – a glorious collision of shiny pop and pomp rock. His debut album, *Life in Cartoon Motion*, released next February and containing the single "Grace Kelly", is a masterpiece in pop melodrama. One part Rufus Wainwright to two parts Queen, the album finds Mika extolling the virtues of generously proportioned women ("Big Girl") and simply celebrating being alive ("Love Today"). With a recent appearance on *Later With Jools Holland*, a Radio 1 Record of the Week and a gushing endorsement on Popbitch, Mika's time has clearly come. Bright lights and degeneracy beckon.

Chosen by Fiona Sturges
Portrait by Kalpesh Lathigra →



The photographer Simon Roberts

Russia has always fascinated Simon Roberts: "As a child it seemed vast and mysterious. It took up most of the wall map in my geography classroom and was the vital region to capture in order to win the board game Risk." In March 2007 the results of this early fascination will be published in his first book *Motherland* (Chris Boot Publishing, £25); a mixture of colour portraits and landscapes, both beautiful and sometimes bleak, taken all over Russia giving us a contemporary view of the country after the fall of communism. Roberts and his wife spent a year travelling the country, covering 75,000 kilometres and crossing 11 time zones.

Roberts studied photography at Sheffield University and recognition soon followed; winning The Ian Parry Scholarship, being identified by *Photo District News* as one of their "Emerging Artists" and studying at the World Press Photo Masterclass in Amsterdam. In *Motherland*, Roberts was looking to counter some of the photographs of Russia that he'd seen in the past few years which focused on collapse, emphasising its turbulent past rather than its future possibilities. *Motherland* has this month been exhibited at the Lianzhou Photo Festival in China and will be shown from next February at The Photographers' Gallery in London.
Chosen by Nick Hall
Portrait by Poppy Berry →