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the
trend
issue

Amanda
Byram

HER MOST REVEALING
INTERVIEW EVER

YOUR SNEAK PEEK AT THE
HOTTEST NEW SEASON LOOKS





the comeback girl

Photography
by Kip Carroll
Styling by
Sarah Rickard
Makeup by
Paula Callan-
O'Keefe for
Brown Sugar
Hair by
Michael Doyle
for Peter Mark



Yellow silk dress (€315) by
Ella Tahari © Brown Thomas

There are some people who like to appear as though they don't care what the world thinks of them. Then, there are others, who really, truly don't. Amanda Byram, Castleknock native and internationally successful television presenter belongs to the latter category. Yes, she's savvy, she knows how to make good on the right connections, and how to forge a career from being more than just a pretty face, but no, she is not about to alter her down-to-earth, throaty-laughed peppered personality for anyone. Amanda is one of the very few Irish women to make a serious mark in the US television industry, but now, on return to Ireland, you'd never imagine the girl who melted seamlessly into the star-spangled LA lifestyle could be just as Irish, self-deprecating and down-to-earth as ever.

"Everyone has a therapist in LA," she laughs, "but that was never going to happen to me! I prefer to sort out my own problems by talking to my best friend or my family rather than paying a

stranger to do it!" Amanda's time in America saw her broadcast to viewers in their millions, in prime time slots from reality series *Paradise Hotel* to extreme makeover show *The Swan*.

She beat off stiff competition with grace, an ease of presenting style and more than a little intelligence. A former model, her looks greased the wheels of success, but she feels there's far more to making the cut than being pleasant on the eye.

"Everyone knows that body-consciousness is at a whole other level in LA. And, yes, I'd modelled here in Ireland, but landing there and seeing all these incredibly worked-out glossy people could put the fear into anyone! I did worry, I thought, 'Oh my god, I'm not good enough, attractive enough. I mentioned it to my mum once and she soon told me to cop on, that I had always been the type of person to make the best of what I had. It reminded me that there will always be women who are more beautiful than you, more toned than you, whatever. The key is to give yourself a break and remember that you are unique – and that's a good thing!"



Turquoise silk dress (€1,710) by Lanvin @ Harvey Nichols



Now boasting a heavyweight CV, Amanda started her television career as the first ever female presenter of *Ireland AM*, followed up with a presenting slot on Channel 4's *The Big Breakfast*, and moving to the international consciousness as she presented the Miss World pageant in 2003.

As a child, she wanted to be an actress. She remembers "always messing around as a kid", performing for her family, and dreaming of starring roles on the big screen. Her sister, Natasha, carved out a successful career in Irish modelling, with Amanda following her sibling onto the catwalk on coming of age. From the get-go, Amanda was hugely in demand as a model, her professionalism and versatility forming further ticks beside the vital statistics boxes. She remembers setbacks, however, saying that each one only served to make her stronger. "Working in modelling was a great preparation for the rejection that is inherent to the television industry," she says. "You don't like me, how I look, what I sound like? That's fine – someone else will, as long as I keep showing up to audition!" Again, she talks of knowing your strengths, and playing to them. "I was never going to be modelling in Milan or Paris, and that was fine. There's no point in getting frustrated. Just get on with it!"

Amanda's relaxed, self-deprecating attitude almost – but not quite – masks an underlying steeliness. "I am a control freak," she admits. "I've always liked to do things the correct way, to prepare properly, to be sure of myself." At school, she was

academically competitive, a trait which continued when she entered college, studying Visual Communications at DIT Mountjoy Square. "I love art, to draw and paint. And I was lucky to get into a notoriously difficult course. But when I was there, I got a bit of a shock. I realised that fellow students were better than me in certain areas, and I didn't like that!" she laughs. "I wanted to be the best at whatever I did, and it took some adjustment to realise that another career beckoned."

This desire to follow her heart served her well as she navigated the competitive waters in Hollywood. "They asked me to do a lot of things I didn't want to do," she says. "Like forcing fake tears when I was doing *The Swan*. I told them that I was Irish, and if someone from back home saw me faking tears on the tv I'd be slagged forever about it! Sure, I'd hold the contestant's hand for the big reveal, and I genuinely did become emotional when it came to the effect these dramatic makeovers had on people's lives – it's quite the bizarre experience – but I never believed that being unreal was the way to keep viewers interested."

Now working from Dublin and London, Amanda's most recent shooting schedule involved a six week stint in Buenos Aires. She filmed *Total Wipeout*, a BBC physical challenge show, in the Argentinian capital with co-presenter Richard Hammond, of *Top Gear* fame. Better still, she was accompanied on this working trip by her boyfriend of seven months, Craig McMullen, a star Australian rugby player whose sporting career has taken him from Oz to New

AMANDA LOVES...

"I'M STILL RE-ACCLIMATISING TO CLOTHES SHOPPING IN IRELAND, BUT I AM A FAN OF COSTUME BOUTIQUE ON CASTLE MARKET. I'M LOVING THIS ROLAND MOURET DRESS!"

"I DO LIKE TO WEAR SOME DESIGNER PIECES, BUT I'M OFTEN AS HAPPY PICKING UP BASICS IN H&M AND CUTE SHOES IN OFFICE."

"MY SKINCARE ROUTINE IS VERY IMPORTANT TO ME, AND I STICK RIGIDLY TO IT! I GO TO AN AMAZING DERMATOLOGIST IN LA FOR MICRODERMABRASION, AND AT HOME, I'M A CRÈME DE LA MER ADDICT."