

InStyle

HOT PARTY TRENDS

Sequins, snake print & sexy (red) shoes

Exclusive
CHERYL COLE
HER ONLY INTERVIEW

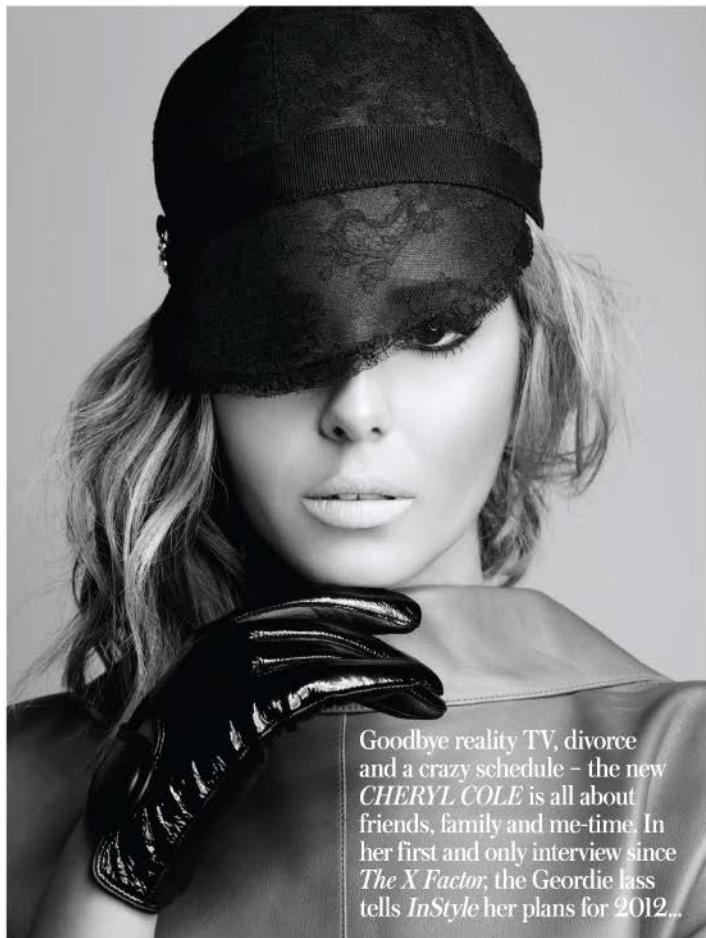
THE 100 BEST-DRESSED LIST

CHRISTMAS
SORTEE!
GENIUS GIFTS
UNDER \$50

KATE
WINSLET'S
BEAUTY
SECRETS

DESIGNERS
MAKE FILMS
FOR INSTYLE

• Christian Dior
 • Marc Jacobs
 • House of Holland
 • Burberry • Prada
 • Alexander Wang • Zac Posen



Goodbye reality TV, divorce and a crazy schedule – the new **CHERYL COLE** is all about friends, family and me-time. In her first and only interview since *The X Factor*, the Geordie lass tells *InStyle* her plans for 2012...



Lace hat, £470, Arcore (020 7499 4002); Leather dress, £3,200, Loewe (020 7499 0246); Patent-leather and leather gloves, Cordier London, as before.

It's not uncommon to experience the odd glitch on a celebrity photo shoot. But as Cheryl Cole arrives on set today, the specific drama that unfolds is the last thing we'd expect. The problem consists of one very angry wisdom tooth, which reared its painful head the night before. The petite Geordie is clutching her swollen face and can barely talk. Not the best start but, after months of negotiations – with her agent, publicist and cosmetics house L'Oréal Paris, for which she's a spokesmodel – to nail Cheryl's first and only interview since the *X Factor* debacle, we are weak with relief that she's turned up at all.

The whole day has been organised with M15-style levels of security, giving us a startling glimpse into what it's like to live under the Cole spotlight. At one point, we aren't even allowed to know her Starbucks order, in case that too is examined by a million blogs to within an inch of its toothy life. (It's skinny, extra shot, extra-hot latte with vanilla-flavoured syrup, if you really want to know. But please don't analyse – she simply likes the taste.)

There are a lot of Cheryl's inner circle here today. Her chosen beauty people are, vitally, all old friends. "I have a relationship and an understanding with them and, most importantly, they're nice," she explains, admitting it's taken her ages to trust someone enough to even "give me a massage". Finishing off the mini-entourage is her younger brother Gary (who has the same distinctive Malteser-brown eyes), unobtrusively making his big sister endless cups of tea and just, well, being there.

Cheryl sits amiably, flicking through photos on her iPhone and jumping up for a little dance to Nicki Minaj's "Super Bass". With an obvious temperature (she's clammy to touch when changing her clothes) and aching mouth, her volume may be dimmed, but pop her in front of a camera and she softens, brightens and unfurls like a peachy flower.

Before she finally heads off to the dentist to get that tooth seen to, I hand her a bag of Jo Malone goodies and some Lola's Cupcakes. "I love them," she gasps. "I love licking the toppings off – you have this total sugar rush. It's like the Benny Hill music going in your mind!" Then she disappears into her car – every molar-aching moment of her journey no doubt charted by frantic paparazzi.

Eleven days later, I've arranged to meet Cheryl at The Langham hotel, a plush, traditional establishment on London's Regent Street. She's waiting for me in a suite, minus the swollen face – in fact, she's noticeably trimmer all round. "I've been doing the Tracy Anderson DVD," she confesses. I take up residence beside her on a giant sofa – next to her 5ft 2in frame, I've never felt more cumbersome. Coffee and biscuits are laid out (which she doesn't touch, instead ordering a peppermint tea when it emerges they're all out of builder's). She's genuinely flattered that I like her Superty black leather jacket. But then, she does love "anything with a high collar".

Today's ensemble also includes a navy blue silk blouse tucked into a Paul & Joe miniskirt, Christopher Kane neon heels and a cute floral costume ring. Even up close, she is immaculate – every brow hair is in place and her baby-pink nail wraps shine prettily. She's relaxed and friendly – and also nervous. It's been a long time since she's given an interview.

I tell her I'm impressed at what a trouper she was on the shoot. "Nah, you just have to get on with it. I feel back to myself now, anyway," she says, her smile revealing those dimples (you sort of feel an irresistible urge to dip a finger into them, to see how deep they go). Turns out, that wisdom tooth was removed in the end.

But she's okay now. Remarkably okay, considering that it was just over a year ago that doctors gave her 24 hours to live after contracting malaria. "Everything changed after that. It was... a big change for me," she says quietly. In what way? "Well, for a start, I was yellow because of my kidneys – it was a bit like jaundice. It was hard to find a matching foundation, let me tell you!" So how did she recover? "I had to take good care of myself and I was told to stop exercising and to gain weight to get well. I just ate everything," she says, simply.

There's no hint of defensiveness here, she's just matter of fact as she explains why, not that long ago, we all saw pictures of her with what newspapers rushed to call a "curvier frame" when she was photographed for her US *X Factor* press call. She was, she says, actually following medical advice.

"The malaria also ate away at my muscles," she says, rolling her eyes, "but let's not get grim. It opened my eyes to health and things I hadn't focused on before. It's now less about work, work, work and more about making time to chill and be with my friends and family."

But she still can't help making headlines wherever she goes. Even the Cole hair needs its own PR. Take the frenzy created after she made another *X Factor* appearance at the LA auditions, sporting a bigger mane than usual. Is that hard to deal with, criticism that personal? "My mantra is, 'The bigger the hair, the closer to heaven'. I'd have gone bigger if my hairstylist had let me," she replies.

I'm intrigued to know what made her change her trademark brunette locks into today's choppy blonde. In the past, she's always been adamant she would never cut her hair shorter. And the media has noted with interest it's the same colour she had when she first got together with ex-husband Ashley Cole (who today is *definitely* off-limits as a subject). Cheryl's in no mood to over-analyse. "I had my hair like this ages ago – I wanted it to be more asymmetrical at this time. I'm always looking for something that pushes my wardrobe and the make-up colours I wear, and this seemed like the best thing to do at this moment. My hairstylist loves me for it."

But the new hair did happen almost the minute she came home from LA, following her surprise dismissal as a judge on US *X Factor*. Coincidence? "It was quite in-the-moment, actually. I'm excited about it; it was just time for a change."

It seems, indeed, there is life after Simon Cowell. She went out to entertain the troops in Afghanistan this autumn and has started filming *What to Expect When You're Expecting*, a Hollywood rom-com due out next summer, starring Cameron Diaz and Jennifer Lopez. "I am so excited," she says. "It's not an acting role, but a cameo – and I can't wait to meet Jennifer and Cameron. They're both so iconic. The role was suggested to us and I was like, 'Are you serious?'"

She likes talking about other celebrities, does Cheryl. The Duchess of Cambridge has "amazing" hair and her beauty idol is Kim Kardashian. "You know what I love about her? She's a nice person. And I like the fact that she's a woman with curves and she knows how to dress. It's hard to know how to dress sometimes," she says, with the pragmatism of someone who has experienced *mostly* fawning delight over her choices, but also the occasional raised fashion eyebrow. "I learnt the hard way that, just because something looks nice on someone else, it doesn't mean it'll work for your height, size and figure. I tried and failed miserably in my teenage years, but now I know to take things as inspiration and adapt them to work for me."

We've all made fashion mistakes, but does it hurt when people lay into her? "Not any more.

It did in the beginning, but now I care more about how I feel. Although, you do think everyone's looking when you're having a crappy day. But who cares what the critics say?"

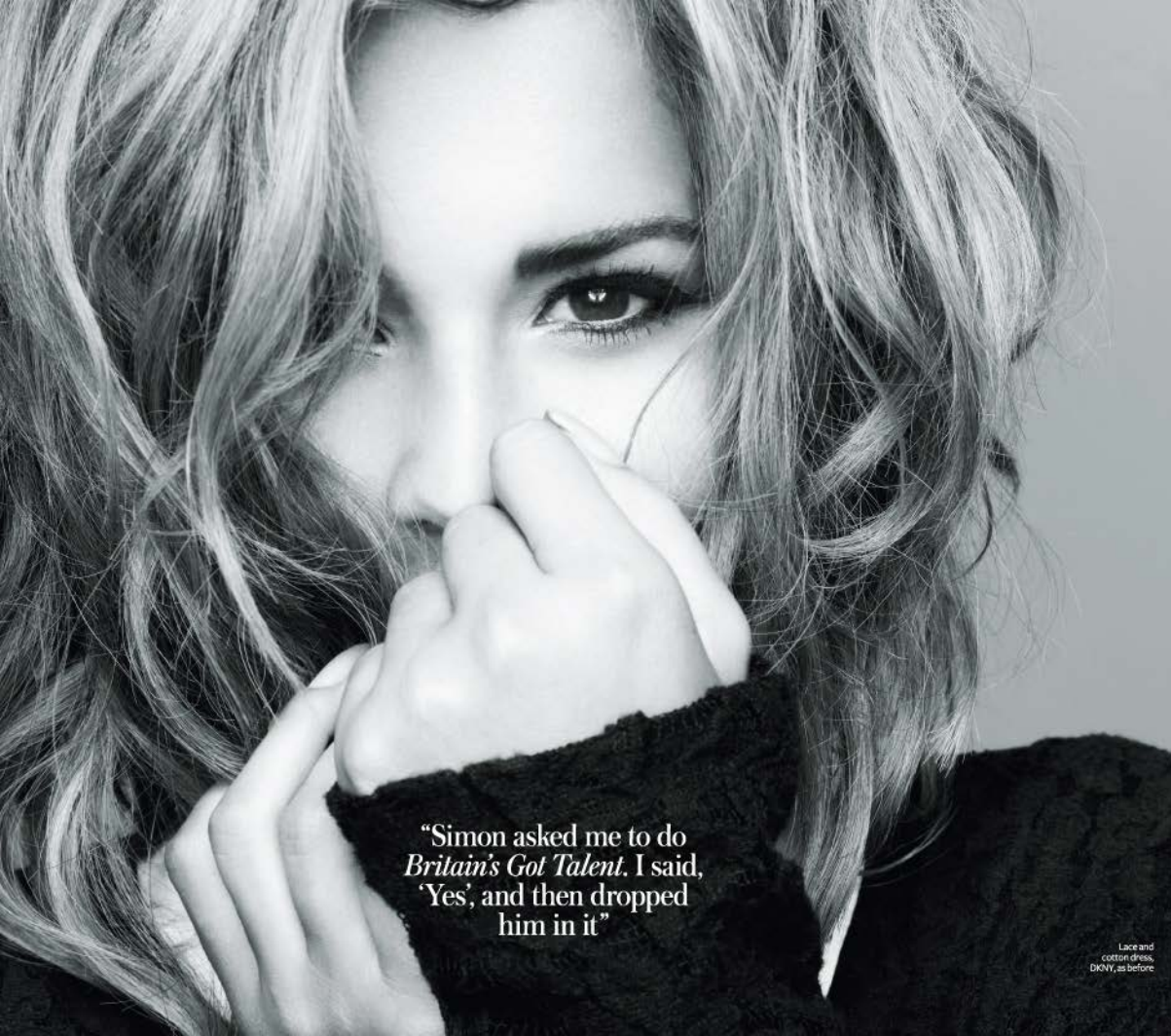
If you google Cheryl Cole, in excess of 37 million results come up. That's more than many world leaders. And, as a star who's notched up 20 top-ten singles with Girls Aloud, two number-one solo albums, two number-one solo singles and is managed by BFF Will.I.am, it shouldn't be a surprise that she's been spending a lot of time in LA. But I find it hard to imagine her there: the land of juice diets and nip-tucks. She's got the wardrobe, the bone structure, the ambition and the talent, but she comes across as more PG Tips than Prada. She's quick to admit that she hasn't been fully converted. "I do like LA, but I wouldn't say I love it. I'm just too homey. I am at my happiest in my PJs and slippers, with a cup of tea.

"Whenever my friends and family ask me what I want for Christmas, it's always a fluffy pair of pyjamas. When I have the most beautiful pair of heels on, I'm always dying to take them off. I used to get in trouble on *The X Factor*, because we would come back from the ad break and I was always at the judges' table, trying to get my shoes back on. Sitting there during the auditions all day in heels, it was killer. Can you imagine? And the audience would laugh."

Ah, *The X Factor*. It isn't a banned subject exactly and she's happy to mention Simon – but she definitely uses the past tense: "*The X Factor* just happened, really. Simon had previously asked me to do *Britain's Got Talent* and I'd kind of said yes, then said no at the last minute and dropped them in it." Retrospectively ironic, perhaps? "Simon said to me at the time, 'Shame, as I was going to ask you to do *The X Factor*'. I told him, 'Never'. Then it came up again and I was like, 'Okay, I'll do it', she shrugs. ▶

Lace and cotton dress, £206, DKNY (020 7499 6238)





“Simon asked me to do *Britain’s Got Talent*. I said, ‘Yes’, and then dropped him in it”

Lace and
cotton dress,
DKNY, as before

Did she know how commercially influential she was on *The X Factor*? When she dyed her hair red, sales of the home kit she used (L'Oréal Paris's Casting Crème Gloss in Mahogany) were boosted by almost 200 per cent; and, when a limited-edition pink can of Elnett hairspray was released, featuring Cheryl's face and signature, three were bought every minute. And whatever she had chosen to wear on TV that night would sell out instantly – even those bold Wolford Bondage tights. She looks incredulous. “Seriously? I don't believe it, how nice. I didn't actually always have a stylist. *X Factor* wasn't like that to begin with – it was Sharon Osbourne, it was Louis Walsh... it wasn't about any of that.” In other words, it wasn't the hot fashion runway it soon became? “I just went on to Net-a-Porter and got loads of nice things for my new job. But it was flattering, don't get us wrong, getting all that attention about my clothes. I'd never had that before.”

Net-a-Porter, it turns out, is a pet love of Cheryl's, as she can't bear store changing rooms. “When you go in the dressing rooms, why do they always have the worst lighting? You come away feeling down, you don't buy anything and it's actually not what you look like. And the mirrors! I think they should spend more time and money on them,” she says decisively.

As we're meeting on the eve of the new UK *X Factor* 2011, I wonder whether she'll be watching. “Of course. I'm excited to see how it's different. Will you?” We agree that Saturday nights are made for takesaways and *The X Factor*. Has she met new judge Tulisa Contostavlos? “She's lovely. I've known her for years. She came to my birthday party. You know what's funny? People are surprised I say I'll be watching and that I'm a fan of Tulisa's, but all they know is what they read in the gossip magazines and it tends to be crap. They base their opinion on something they have no knowledge of, they don't know the facts or the truth and it drives me mad.”

Some facts, then. Cheryl Ann Tweedy, 28, was born on the 30 June 1983 and grew up on a council estate in Newcastle upon Tyne, a city that she still considers home. “I think I always will,” she says. One of five siblings, she was the only child to be born with those iconic dimples. “Just me, the bad luck of the draw. I don't really get all the attention about them, they've been a pain in my backside: someone even once said they made me look like a hamster.”

It's safe to say that Cheryl still has an army of followers up north, whom she sweetly refers to as her “soldiers” (slightly more affectionate than Lady Gaga's “monsters”) and a fiercely loyal support network, including Girls Aloud bandmate Kimberley Walsh. Earlier this year, Cheryl even co-hosted a tea party at Kimberley's house to watch the royal wedding: “I made all the sandwiches: egg mayo and bacon bits, cucumber and ham... I even cut the crusts off. My brother brought some pesse pudding down from Newcastle and we also had stottie bread. We took it as an excuse to eat all day – it was a disgrace and we all fell sick that night.”

And, for this special occasion, the pyjamas came off. “I got all dressed up like I was going” Er... why? “Because it's history! I was a baby when Charles and Diana got married, but this is something you'll want to tell your kids about and say, ‘Look what me and Auntie Kimberley were doing when William and Kate got married!’”

“PEOPLE DON'T KNOW THE FACTS
OR THE TRUTH AND IT DRIVES ME MAD”

Wool dress, £1,950,
Azzaro (020 7499
4002). Patent leather
and leather gloves,
£35, Corder London
(020 7739 9795)