



Q&A with SOLANGE

'GIRLS OF BLAZE DISC' COLLECTION

How does it feel to be a Creative Consultant for PUMA's Women's Lifestyle range?

I am able to express my love for not only design but the conception of creative ideas, and the execution of them by curating amazingly talented teams. I've had so much fun producing special content, ad campaigns, events, and working alongside the awesome PUMA team with some of my favorite emerging artists, photographers, graphic designers, and more to create visual experiences that really celebrate with both mine and PUMA's vision and philosophies.

Over the summer, I paired 4 incredible designers (GERLAN, WILLIAM OKPO, HISHAM BAROOCHA) to interpret the classic (and one of my personal faves) PUMA Disc, each in their own distinctive aesthetic to present "GIRLS OF BLAZE" inspired by the sights and sounds of Brazil. I couldn't be more excited about the result. The shit is wild, and I hope you will be just as in love as I am. This has been a dream job, and the ride has just begun!

What sort of flavor and/or style are you bringing to this PUMA collection? How were you influenced by these up-and-coming designers?

Well my love for colors, prints and textiles play a role in almost everything I do creatively, but it was also about realizing the versatility throughout the three different designers and expressing that for different personal styles. I like to think that Hisham's design is really for the bold and wild at heart, while Gerlan's designs are definitely playful, a bit quirky with a more sporty edge, while the Okpo sisters' use of texture really leans on a more bohemian vibe. All of these designers I've been friends with and collaborated with in one way or another, and I really consider them the new faces of insanely talented emerging creatives. Being able to celebrate that on a scale as big and iconic as this project with PUMA has felt incredible!

Why did you pick the PUMA Disc Blaze for your first project with the Brand?

I was first introduced to the PUMA Disc via instagram, and I didn't know much about the history involved...just that I really loved the silhouette and thought the Disc was such a cool take on sneakers. I requested them for a magazine shoot, and ended up wearing them on the cover I loved them so much. That really started the initial conversation with the PUMA family, my enthusiasm for the Disc...so it only felt right to get my hands on them first! There's also so much versatility for what you can do from a design standpoint and I absolutely wanted to approach this project from a maximist perspective.

We are seeing more and more ladies trading in their stilettos for sneakers. What are your thoughts about this 'trend'? Do you think Women are also a key player within the sneaker community that Brands need to pay attention to?

I will be the first to admit, sneakers were always mostly used in my lifestyle in an athletic setting. However, once I moved to New York that changed. When you're walking from spot to spot, hopping in and out of cabs and the train, by mid-day the thing that suffers the most are your feet. Going out at night? Forget about it! So I started to try to structure my outfits around a statement sneaker honestly out of practicality. I think women have really focused on the idea that sexiness and femininity is a state of mind, really projecting confidence throughout the voice of saying when I feel good, I look good. That can be interpreted in so many ways...but certainly a level of comfort can exist. You will never have more fun at the club when you are wearing sneakers *really* dancing your ass off! I've also noticed, the gender lines have crossed so much when it comes to sneakers as well, women are wearing men's sneakers, and I can't tell you how many men have asked me if the Discs from my collection will come in larger sizes so they can rock them as well! It's really about giving people the best expressive and innovative designs possible and I think that has evolved so much in the sneaker community especially with the spirit of collaborations. Sneakers have gotten fun!

You've been travelling the world a lot this past year because of your music – have you been inspired with the music, fashion and style of the different cities you have visited? If so, which ones were you most inspired by? Will this be translated into your upcoming collections with PUMA?

Traveling has always been one of my biggest sources of inspiration and is really reflected in my all different forums of my artistry. I'm generally drawn to places that historically make color, and textiles a true focal point of the culture. Traveling within Africa, most recently Ghana and Senegal, I've been insanely inspired at the extremely natural and intuitive nature of mixing the highs and lows of athletic staples with modern fashion. Soccer shirts, with beautiful printed skirts, or dresses with sneakers...I mean honestly, from a fashion standpoint Africans just have it and always have. That continent is filled with so much diversity from region to region and will always be my biggest source of inspiration stylistically.

You were recently vacationing in Jamaica. As you are aware, Jamaica is one of the Brand's favorite cities! How was your trip? Did you pick up any style inspirations?

I'm in love with Jamaica and actually take a trip there a few times a year, mainly Treasure Beach and Port Antonio. I can totally see why PUMA is just as in love as I am, and love seeing the parallel love between the brand and the county when I'm there. When I was 13, I took my first trip there and for about 4 years if it wasn't yellow, green and black it wasn't on my body. Just google "solo star" (my first album) or the "feeling you" (my first ever video), I mean I literally staged a Jamaican street festival in my video. Jamaica will always hold a special place in my heart and when I'm there I really go all out with my clothes. Jamaicans are extremely expressive with their fashion, so I always blend in just fine.

What three personal style tips are you able to share with your followers who consider you a fashion icon?

First off, I'm very careful at owning that title. I really am just as influenced by the everyday girls on the street as much as I am the glamazons, or singers, artists, and performers...I simply am a fan of anyone who really identifies with themselves in that moment and own it! SO with that said - Feel it. Own it. Work it.

Of the many hats you wear - singer, songwriter, dancer, model, actor, fashion arbiter, what title do you want to be best remembered for?

I think "Artist" is really the one I identify with the most. I really try to bring a certain level of artistry to everything I do, and I really believe everything mentioned here is a form of artistry and falls under the umbrella of creation. Whether it be a video clip, or choreographing something for my band and my live show, or working with the PUMA creative team - I'm really always looking for the most artful form of expressing that intent.

Your music and style has caught on a huge following outside of the States, especially in Asia-Pacific. What would you like to tell your fans in Asia? Would you mind giving them a shout-out, please?

I'm always so humbled by the idea that my creations can reach someone all the way across the world! I've always been really influenced by the bravery and boldness of Japanese fashion culture so we are truly inspiring each other.

You recently spent quite some time in Australia for shows in December and January. It is summer season 'down under' – what do you plan to do on your down time?

I enjoyed Australia so much! Some of the highlights of my trips were hanging out in Perth on the beautiful beaches, shopping in Fitzroy, and the botanical garden in Melbourne. Also the concerts were pretty magical; the enthusiasm from the crowd was so electrifying. The jetlag on the other hand...help me please!

What is *next* in store for Solange?

I'm wrapping up the writing on my album which is my heart and soul right now, as well as focusing on Saint Records, my label and first release respectively while building saintheron.com in the process. Also continuing my role at PUMA which I am truly enjoying! It's really a dream job for me, I am loving it. 2014 is an exciting year ahead.