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**Look out, Lena Dunham**

Meet the very uninhibited  
new voice of Generation Y

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The Sunday Telegraph



“Life is not about finding yourself,” reads a sign on the sideboard in Paris Hilton’s house. “Life is about creating yourself.” So whom or what exactly has Paris Hilton created? To some the celebute-actress-singer-model-perfumer-brand known as Paris is an astute businesswoman peddling her naivety with acumen, to others a deluded Barbie-like child-woman completely divorced from reality.

Even the engraved name above her doorbell is designed to confuse: Princess Paris, it reads. “I am the closest thing to American royalty,” she once said – to widespread ridicule. Bashing Paris Hilton is an international sport. And it is tempting to follow suit – but, underneath all the layers, there seems to be a kernel of something genuine.

“The princess Barbie [image] is a fun character but in real life I’m very chill and down-to-earth normal,” says Hilton, 33, reclining on a black leather sofa in a pink Juicy Couture tracksuit in her nightclub. Of course, normal people do not have private nightclubs in their homes but Hilton’s perception of normality is a little different from most. Once hailed as New York’s

leading it-girl, Hilton is the great-granddaughter of Conrad Hilton, the founder of Hilton hotels, but has spent much of her life trying to escape her heritage. Last year she even launched herself as an international DJ at the Amnesia nightclub in Ibiza and the club nights proved so successful – “I killed it” – that she is returning this summer. “I feel like DJs are the new rock stars,” says Hilton modestly. Reviews, however, were mixed. One commentator described her as “fun and lovely”, while another said her residency marked “the end of Ibiza”.

When she is not singing, acting, posing or DJing, she is building her business empire, the cornerstone of which is her perfume line. “We’ve done over \$1.8 billion in sales [on my fragrances]. I have 16 other product lines [including] clothing, sunglasses, shoes, lingerie, swimwear, eyelashes, nails, my own motorcycle team, dog clothes... I have 60 Paris Hilton stores that carry all my products.” Recently she opened her first hotel, in the Philippines. “It’s called Paris, not Hilton, just me,” she says, “because I don’t want people to think it’s my family’s. It’s mine.”

# Putting on the ditz

Photograph by **Amanda Friedman**

She has a whole room devoted to Jimmy Choo ‘shoobies’, and a miniature villa (complete with chandelier) just for her dogs. And yet the socialite – and now DJ – Paris Hilton insists she is ‘down-to-earth normal’. *Helena de Bertodano* wouldn’t go quite that far, but is prepared to believe she’s not half as dumb as she is painted...





Her house is as gloriously over the top as you would imagine. It is, essentially, a shrine to herself – and maybe, on a much smaller scale, to Marilyn Monroe, her “icon”. Every gilt and lacquered surface, almost every square inch of wall, is covered with images of Hilton – Hilton covered with gold paint, Hilton greeting her fans, Hilton with Elizabeth Taylor (who married her great uncle), Hilton printed even on her cushions. A giant image of her, made up of thousands of tiny images, covers one wall, while her portrait looks over the sweeping banister of her staircase. “I like it because it looks very regal,” she says as we walk down the stairs past it. “In movies everyone always has an elegant picture painted of them and I was like, ‘I need one of those...’”

**‘If people want to be mean, that’s their problem. It used to be really hurtful. Now I just laugh’**

When Hilton “needs one of those” she tends to get it. But, as she is at pains to point out, it is on her own tab. “People assume because I’m a Hilton that ‘her parents gave that to her’. It’s annoying because it’s so far from the truth.”

Hilton parlayed her success as a socialite into a business, launching a lifestyle brand in 2004. She started with a jewellery line sold on Amazon, then helped create a perfume for Parlux. It was intended as a small release but, thanks to her name, became a huge success and the first of many scents. She has always stressed that she did this alone, without financial assistance from her family. Although Hilton gives credit to her “amazing team”, she says that all the key decisions are hers. “I am the CEO and the creative director. I come up with ideas and I always make the final decision. I like to get people’s opinions but I’m the boss.” Later I speak to her manager, Jamie, who is downstairs putting the finishing touches to a video to launch her 17th fragrance. “I figure out how to mould and translate Paris’s ideas – for example, she gives me notes on

wardrobe and accessories and I keep redesigning until we have it.”

She shows me her bedroom, with its black and gold bed and a terrace overlooking her swimming-pool and the San Fernando valley beyond. To the right is her dog-kennel, which looks like a small Italian villa, complete with cornicing, black crystal chandelier and designer furniture. “Hi baby, I love you,” she coos, waving at one of the dogs which has appeared on its own miniature balcony.

“I’ll show you my closet,” says Hilton, leading me into



Clockwise from above  
Hilton the model, on the catwalk for Heatherette, 2004; Hilton the DJ; in *The Simple Life* with Nicole Richie, 2003

a room that is almost as large as her bedroom with multiple rows of shoes, predominantly Jimmy Choo. There are no clothes. “This is just my shobbies,” she explains, in baby-talk. “Here is my real closet.” We walk into another large room, where hundreds, if not thousands, of designer dresses are hanging. How on earth does she choose what to wear? “It gives me a panic attack sometimes,” she says with a laugh, throwing her arms against a rail of dresses and sinking theatrically into it. Her eye falls on a turquoise bejewelled mini sheath dress. “This is a custom piece I had made in India. I love it because it just blings.” She takes it off the rail: “I think I might use it in my music video.”

Hilton is making a video for her latest single, *Come Alive*. “It’s about that feeling when you’ve just fallen in love and feel so alive – it’s the best feeling in the world.” She has been in love a few times – as well as a rumoured relationship long ago with

Leonardo DiCaprio, she was engaged to one Greek shipping heir, Paris Latsis, then went out with another, Stavros

Niarchos. Later she had a relationship with the baseball player Doug Reinhardt. For the past couple of years she has been dating the Spanish model River Viiperi, 22, although I don’t get the impression that it is very serious – of the hundreds of photographs around Hilton’s house, I don’t see a single one of him. I ask her if they are still together. “Yes,” she says. “He’s a really, really sweet guy...”

She pays no attention to her critics these days. “If people want to be mean,

that's their problem. It used to be really hurtful. I would call and cry to my mom all the time but now I just laugh." She has also become better at working out who her true friends are. "So many people have bad intentions, so many girls want to hang out [with me] to be someone. I weed those people out of my life. I call them hungry tigers."

As a teenager she became a victim of a boyfriend, Rick Salomon, who filmed a sex tape with her that later went viral under the title *1 Night in Paris*. "It was devastating because that was someone I was with for a few years. I don't think I'll ever be able



**The sex tape was 'devastating. I don't think I'll ever be able to fully trust any man again after that'**

to fully trust any man again after that. It was just the most hurtful and awful thing that anyone could do to a little girl. I was very young, it wasn't my fault."

It has been suggested that Hilton herself allowed the tape to go public as a publicity stunt just before her notorious reality-television show *The Simple Life* was first broadcast. But as she said - quite wittily - in the 2008 documentary *Paris, Not France*, "If I was going to do something like that I would look hot. I looked gross in that video."

By that point she had already built a level of fame: she had been on several magazine covers including *Vanity Fair* and had had a cameo in the film *Zoolander*, but it was *The Simple Life*, which ran for five series, starting when she was 22, that really made her name and was responsible for Hilton's dumb-blonde image. She and her co-star Nicole Richie were uprooted from their lives of luxury and sent to Arkansas to sample how the other, poorer half lives. "Walmart - do they like make walls there?" was a classic Hilton comment. She has been trying to live it down ever since. "I played a character the whole

time - I think a lot of people assume that must be who I am in real life." She fell out with Richie during the show but now says it was nothing. "She's like a sister to me."

As a child growing up in Beverly Hills, Hilton always knew the import of her surname. "At school kids would be like, 'Oh my God, you own Hilton hotels, you're so rich.' As I turned into my teens I realised I wanted to do something, I didn't want to be a trust-fund kid." Her relatives, particularly her grandfather, had a big impact on her.



From top With her boyfriend, River Viiperi, last year; with her parents and sister Nicky

"Watching all these men create those empires was so inspiring. I observed and paid attention. From a young age I knew I wanted to do big things."

When she was 15, Hilton's family moved to New York, where she fell under the laser gaze of Donald Trump, who decided she would be just the person to help launch his new modelling agency. "He called my dad and said, 'Your daughter is gorgeous. I'd love her to be my first model.' My mom and dad were like, 'No way.' So I called Donald myself and said, 'Don't listen to them. Let's do this.'" I ask if her parents were angry. "A little bit but then they saw I was getting my school work done and being responsible."

Her parents, she says, have always been supportive and she is still close to them: her mother calls her several times a day (at least twice while I am with her) and they all dine together once a week.

"I had the most amazing childhood," says Hilton, hugging her knees to her chest. "My parents have been together since my mom was 15. In Hollywood almost everyone's divorced. My friends would come to my house and see this perfect family and I realised how lucky I was. Now, when I'm looking for a guy, I'm always thinking of someone who is like my dad: a loyal person with a good heart, because that's all that matters in life."

She refers often to the day "when I have a family" and longs for children - but not yet. "I wouldn't have time right now... I'm only in LA maybe 20 per cent of the time. I wish I was here more."

Her home, she says, is her "sanctuary" and, given the choice between an evening out or in, says the latter is more appealing. "I love to cook for myself - my mom taught me how to cook

lasagnes and pastas and bake."

She believes her businesses are so successful because her fans (she has 12.8 million followers on Twitter) want "to buy a piece of me. It's like a kind of Barbie American dream. I have that childlike quality so a lot of little girls especially [like me]. I've always been a kid at heart. I think I always will be."

A big believer in astrology, Hilton says she is a true Aquarian. "We are social butterflies, humanitarians, geniuses: Einstein was one." It takes a lot of self-control not to poke fun here. But even if she and Einstein have little in common, Hilton could easily have been nothing more than a socialite. She could have married one of her Greek heirs, smiled prettily for the cameras and wanted for nothing in life. That she refuses to settle for this says something for her. ●

Paris Hilton is DJing at Amnesia from 6 August. "Come Alive" is out tomorrow