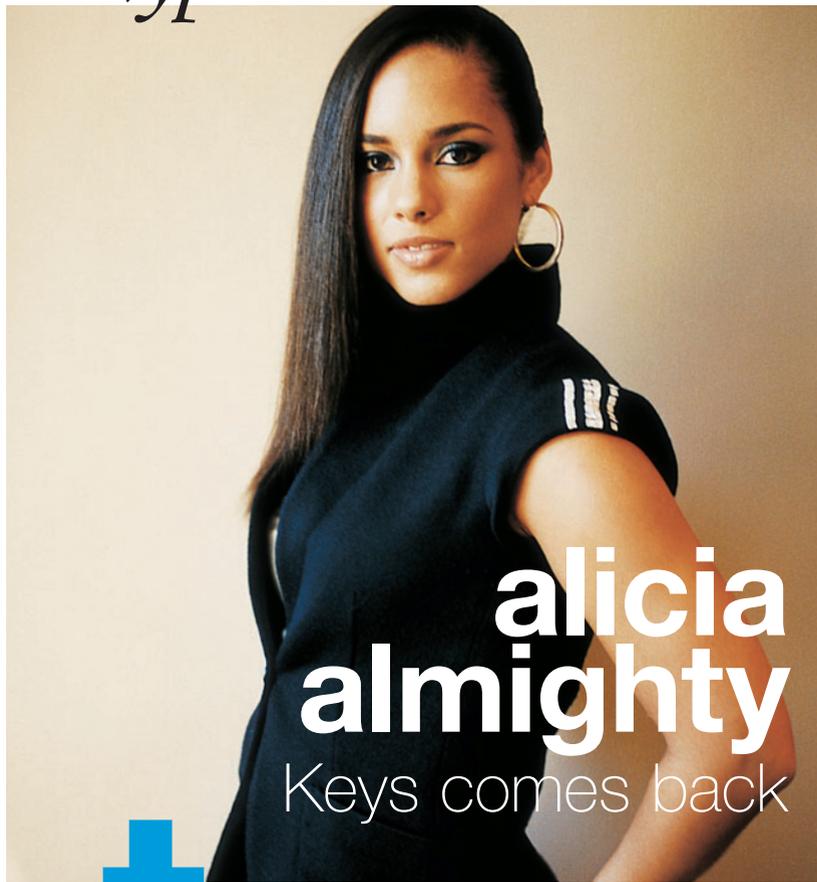


hype SOUND



alicia almighty

Keys comes back

the girl's got more Grammys (nine) than most women have Manolos. She has worked with the likes of Christina Aguilera and Kanye West and she's even got a *New York Times* bestseller under her fedora (a book of lyrics and poetry called *Tears for Water*). But Alicia Keys—aka the closest thing to Roberta Flack our generation will ever see—is unstoppable. Her latest *Billboard*-topping disc, *Unplugged*, is sound proof of that. Filled with live versions of her hits (which may have us trying to sing "Fallin'" at red lights again), the disc also features a gutsy duet with Maroon 5's Adam Levine. Come next year, however, Keys is planning on playing more characters and less piano. Cast in Halle Berry's film adaptation of the novel *Compositions in Black and White* and with Ben Affleck in the upcoming flick *Smokin' Aces*, Keys is embarking on what's called "the pivotal point" in a career: Act 2. Before she gets to Oscar red carpetdom, *FLARE* speaks to the star about her life in music.

You've stayed true to your icons by covering their songs with care. What did you do to ensure the Rolling Stones would appreciate your version of "Wild Horses"? "I definitely made it less guitar-heavy and more piano-driven. Covering a song is about giving it your own style. But in the case of "Wild Horses," I wanted to keep the song in the same vein because

it is *such* a classic."
You attended a few shows at Olympus Fashion Week in New York this fall. Which show made you want to sing a high note? "I am in love with [Brazilian designer] Carlos Miele. He is doing these gorgeous lace blouses. Underneath them is gorgeous lining that makes [the pieces] look classy yet sensual."
Kimora Lee Simmons has compared herself to Donatella Versace. Do you see any similarities between the two? "I think so. You can't not remember Kimora [if you see her], which is how I feel about Donatella. They exude the same fashion, elegance and class."
Kanye West recently asked hip-hopsters to stop writing discriminatory lyrics. How do you feel about his pleas? "Any time there's hate—be it prejudice, homophobia, sexism or racism [in your lyrics], it's just going to perpetuate more hatred."
Back in the day, Motown insisted young singers such as Diana Ross and Marvin Gaye be coached in poise and etiquette. Do you think that is still needed today? "A lot of artists do need schooling, be it the way they handle themselves in the media or developing their sound. Myself included. When I first started, I was very rough around the edges." —*Elio Iannacci*

singles bar

Deck your halls with these swingin' singles. Fa la la la la, la la la la!

EARTHA KITT

"Santa Baby (Alexkid & DJ Seep Remix)"
 Kitt's chic hit gets restyled for hip-hop cats and resort catwalks.

EARTH, WIND & FIRE (FEATURING BIG BOI, KELLY ROWLAND AND SLEEPY BROWN)

"This Is How I Feel"
 As funky as Michael Jackson on a good day, this song kicks sass.

DIANA KRALL

"What Are You Doing New Year's Eve"
 Krall croons a classic with sultry vocals that would make Ella Fitzgerald proud.

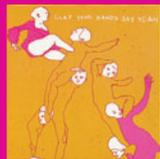


SOUND ADVICE discs of distinction



WOLF PARADE
Apologies to the Queen

Mary Who're they?: arty ragtag Montreal band who happen to be close pals of Arcade Fire
Sounds like: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, melodic anthems about alienation and heartache
You'll dig it if you like: Arcade Fire, late-night carnivals, *Modest Mouse* —*Sarah Liss*



CLAP YOUR HANDS SAY YEAH
Clap Your Hands

Say Yeah Who're they?: the year's craziest freak indie success story from Philadelphia and hipster hotbed Brooklyn
Sounds like: teen boys forget to take their Ritalin, fall in love with beat poetry
You'll dig it if you're into: Roller Derbies, *The Velvet Underground* —*S.L.*



Kimora Lee Simmons picks:

What: Mary J. Blige's

My Life Kimora's fave songs: "I love the songs 'Be Happy' and 'My Life.'" **Why Mary?:** "It's about the journey, the grit and the rawness she delivers. She's a woman who has gone through so much and it's been a beautiful journey—the good and the bad."

PHOTOGRAPHY: GEORGE PIMENTEL (ALICIA KEYS); DJAMILLA ROSA COCHRAN/WIREIMAGE.COM (KIMORA LEE SIMMONS).