

Belle of the Ball

If life is a party, then Megan Pormer is about to make her grand entrance. The model, actress, health and natural beauty advocate is on a mission to take genetic testing to every corner of the globe, as well as help bridge the gap between Hollywood and the Middle East, as her latest collaborative projects will see her become Dubai's ambassador on the red carpet. Much like Disney's recently revived heroine-du-jour, Belle, Megan's stellar combination of beauty and brains is about to set hearts racing.

By Yi-Hwa Hanna

*Cover
Exclusive*



It would be easy to assume that the stunning Megan Pormer—a model, sometime actress, natural beauty, and a Hollywood red-carpet regular who has brushed shoulders with everyone from the likes of JJ Abrams to Kim Kardashian—would be a diva. But you know what they say about assumption—and “diva” couldn’t be more far from the truth, which we realised in a nanosecond when this friendly, warm and effusive soul came breezing through our studio door, her face lit up with a sincere, genuine smile.

Sure, she can channel the moodiness of a top model like the best of them while she’s on a shoot, like the professional that she is—but in real life, Megan Pormer couldn’t be any further from the stereotype of the shallow, power-hungry red-carpet princesses one would imagine is too easy to fall into when your life is spent among the Hollywood glitterati and jetting around to fabulous places. No, instead, Megan is sweet, exceptionally humble, and the kind of woman who takes the time to personally respond to as many people as she can on her Instagram account (yes, she runs it herself and doesn’t have a team of minions do it for her). You could say that maybe this

Perhaps it’s because of her natural charisma, or the fact that she’s a highly educated individual who is extremely passionate about helping to make the world a better place, but this petite powerhouse of a woman has a grace that’s far beyond her 25 years of age.

With a heritage that’s Iranian, Turkish and Russian, Megan grew up in England. The daughter of a civil engineer and an entrepreneur, it’s clear where she got her work ethic: Her father was one of the top ten commercial property developers in the Middle East, who is known for developing Pormer Towers and Pormer Shopping Centers in Iran. Her mother worked closely with her

father as the manager of Pormer Shopping Centers. While to some, it might sound like Megan could have had an easy ride to fame with her family’s comfortable background, Megan wasn’t the type to simply sit around and wait on her heritage. Nope, this bright spark was the type to want to ignite her curious mind and follow her passions into what would turn into an exciting career that blends beauty, brains, and glamour.

Once she finished high school in Worcestershire, Megan finished her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Medical Engineering at the University of Birmingham. She started her PhD in the same field at London’s Imperial College. After completing her studies, her first job out of college was a position that she’d accepted in California, in business development at a leading genetic testing company. “I’ve always been passionate about preventative healthcare and customised beauty. From a very young age, I had two goals that I wanted to achieve in my life. One was to help people live healthier lives, and the other was to help people look younger and more beautiful. To achieve these goals, I focused my studies in the fields of health, wellness and beauty” Megan explains. “While I was studying at the Imperial College London, I read about Angelina Jolie’s experience with genetic testing, which became one of the most debated and discussed topics in healthcare worldwide. I’ve

always admired Angelina Jolie for her beauty and humanitarian work and I was incredibly moved and inspired by her story. It was then that I truly began to comprehend the importance of genetic testing in aiding preventative healthcare. The fact that getting one genetic test can contribute [to] saving a person’s life led me on a mission to take genetic testing to every corner of the globe. I realised that Angelina’s immense star power was a key factor in creating global awareness about the importance of genetic testing. When she opened that door, I wanted to follow and take that same message to members of my own generation, millennials. I knew that Hollywood was the best place for me to take and amplify this message. If I want to really raise awareness about the new innovations in healthcare, I should utilise the Hollywood microphone, which is the most powerful microphone in the world. I decided to move to Los Angeles, and I was on a mission to bridge the gap between the medical world and Hollywood,” she says.

Genetic testing, as Megan explains, involves a simple saliva or blood test that can give you information about your unique genetic makeup. This can help you maximise the benefits of exercise, diet, skincare, and drug treatment, as well as giving people information about predisposition to some diseases and different types of hereditary cancer. The results are confidential and their implications are usually explained by genetic counsellors, she says. And her mission was accomplished: Through a link-up with the Kardashians, Megan managed to make the topic of genetic testing trend worldwide on social media. “After I went back to Los Angeles, I was blessed to

I was blessed to have some of the top doctors *in Beverly Hills connect me with their clients, which [then] allowed me to* **introduce genetic testing to kings, queens, prime ministers, and celebrities.** /



Dress: Jaime Lee (jaimelee.com.au). Ear Cuff: Missguided at Namshi.com. Ring: Stylist's Own. Bracelets: Model's Own. Shoes: Carvela at Namshi.com. "Bella" Everlasting Rose: Forever Rose London (foreverrose.ae).

A real-life version of Beauty And The Beast's enchanted rose, Forever Rose's Bella option isn't the only one of their everlasting roses that can live for far longer than that of an ordinary rose. The company, which began in London in 1999, sources the ultra long-living roses from Ecuador and they are said to live for up to three years. The company has over 21 different variations of rose colours, with more than 50 different varieties of roses, and countless stunning designs.

Midi Dress: Premonition
Designs at StyleDrifter Shop
(shop.styledrifter.com). Tassel
Earrings: Premonition Designs
at StyleDrifter Shop (shop.
styledrifter.com). Woven
Belt: Premonition Designs
at StyleDrifter Shop (shop.
styledrifter.com). Ring and
Bracelets: Model's Own.



have some of the top doctors in Beverly Hills connect me with their clients, which allowed me to introduce genetic testing to kings, queens, prime ministers, and celebrities. A this time, I also wanted to raise the general public awareness of genetic testing and for it to become a worldwide trending topic on social media. The best way to do this was by engaging a top digital influencer. Through the network I had built up in Hollywood, I was introduced to Kris Jenner and the Kardashian family. I made an appearance on an episode of *Keeping Up With The Kardashians*, during which I helped administer genetic tests to Kim, Kris and Khloe. The episode aired in 150 countries and millions

anything she puts her mind to. And her next mission? To connect with various companies in the Middle East, and help bring their message to Hollywood too. "Right now, I'm in Dubai looking for the most innovative health, wellness and customised beauty products to connect to Hollywood. The Middle East has some of the world's most beautiful women and truly unique products, so I'm very excited to identify the right brands and bring them back to the US market. I'm also a red carpet correspondent for a leading health and beauty company, New You. In this position, I interview some of the biggest celebrities about health and beauty. Due to my social influence and

2017. I was [also] selected as the red carpet host for Dubai TV, a media outlet bridging Dubai and Hollywood. My mission is to promote Dubai in advance of the World Expo 2020 while covering major events in LA, New York, and Miami," Megan says.

Her network, combined with her ambition, is undoubtedly one of Megan's greatest strengths, but she is still grateful for the opportunity to have met all of the people she has, from every field. "I have been blessed to meet many top scientists in the genetic testing industry. When I became a member of The American Society of Human Genetics, I was able to meet some of leading experts in the field including Professor

and created a huge disruption in the beauty business with her Kylie cosmetics line. I'm truly inspired by Kris Jenner's strength. I am so impressed by her hard work and her fierce dedication to her family. She almost single-handedly built a billion-dollar empire and more importantly, she gets to work with her kids every day in the process. Other celebrities I've rubbed shoulders with include Leonardo DiCaprio, Gerard Butler, Eva Longoria, Irina Shayk, Bradley Cooper, Ellen DeGeneres, Zendaya, Paris Hilton, The Jacksons, Lindsay Lohan, Celine Dion, Priyanka Chopra, Alessandra Ambrosio, JJ Abrams, Rob Lowe, Cameron Diaz and John Mayer." But still, if Megan were to pick just one person to have dinner with, it would be Angelina Jolie.

"Every time I think about her strength, her delicate soul and how she has changed the lives of millions of people and helped thousands of refugees while raising six kids from different backgrounds, my eyes get teary," she says.

One of the most unique things about Megan—particularly amidst today's modern culture that almost seems to champion a certain hardness to strong women, that seems to deny them the right to be soft, feminine and vulnerable in order to be strong and independent—is the fact that she has found such a peaceful, and happy, medium between strength and softness. Independent, that she undoubtedly is, and strong as well, but perhaps it's because she understands that allowing herself to feel what she really feels is another aspect of her strength, and just a different type of it that she keeps in her arsenal. Megan, now happily engaged, is, like *Beauty And The Beast's* Belle, still a self-described hopeless romantic: "I believe in the power of love. It makes me unstoppable.

My mission [now] is to promote Dubai in advance of the World Expo 2020 while covering major events in LA, New York, and Miami

of people watched it. After it aired, genetic testing became a worldwide trending topic," Megan says.

Certainly, this is a woman who can accomplish almost

access to celebrities, I was recently chosen to become the spokesmodel for Skinue, a major skincare company based in the Middle East that is making its US debut in late

Robert Green, Professor Rob Huizenga, Dr. Garth Fisher and Dr. Paul Nassif. I interview celebrities at major red carpet events a few times a week and it's always a blast to hear about their inspiring stories. My favourite one was Jennifer Lopez. Jennifer inspires me because she's one of the biggest entertainers in the world whose first priority is being a loving mother to her two beautiful children. She's an actress, a singer, a model, an entrepreneur, she does it all. She's an unstoppable force. Her manager, the lovely Benny Medina, is a really dear friend so I've been able to observe firsthand how it is possible for a woman to have it all. I also was inspired by members of the Kardashian family after I worked with them on a project. I love Kylie Jenner because she's taken her fame

A Natural Beauty

"I competed against 3,000 models in Los Angeles to become the face of Skinue, the first bio-based skincare innovation that uses immunized camel whey as its main active ingredient. Growing up [with so many ties to] the Middle East, I always used camel-milk beauty products so I knew how effective they are. I am so excited to take this amazing skin care line and introduce it to the world. It is so important to use all natural products. I also read every ingredient on every product I use. In the morning, I wash my face with Skinue's facial cleanser and use Vitamin C serum. I never wear foundation, instead I wear tinted moisturizer with SPF30. I always take off my makeup before I go to bed, no matter how tired I am. I also use aloe vera and coconut oil daily. I swear by the skincare regimen I got from the world's best facialist Shani Darden. I don't put makeup on my skin as much as I can and instead use makeup and skincare together like a tinted moisturizer. I also love cool laser for having even and tight baby skin, by Hollywood's top cosmetic dermatologist, Dr Simon Ourian. [As for my haircare routine], I do a deep-conditioning treatment once a week and I regularly use leave-in conditioner. I also like to use coconut oil for added shine."

Top: Kendall + Kylie at Namshi.com. Floral Headpiece: Ella at Namshi.com. Ruffle Checked Midi Skirt: Mango at Namshi.com. Shoes: Christian Louboutin. Bracelets and Rings: Model's Own. Clock and Books: Stylist's Own. Forever Rose "A Love Story" Flower-Filled Book: Forever Rose (foreverrose.ae). "Bella" Everlasting Rose: Forever Rose London (foreverrose.ae).





When you have a partner that is on the same page as you are, you have double the drive to achieve both of your dreams and goals. Love makes you shine more, rise more,” she says. Megan and her fiancée, Sheeraz Hasan, met when, after she moved to LA, a friend of hers told her about the success story of a Muslim who had come to the US with no money, no connections, and no access to celebrities, yet who had, within 18 months, single-handedly built the bridge between the two biggest film industries and became the brand ambassador connecting Hollywood and Bollywood. It took her 6 months to get a meeting with him, but once they did, he was very direct and frank with her. He worked with Megan to build and help her achieve her plans and goals in detail, spending the next few hours giving her the roadmap of her life, then said not to call him until she had reached every goal and followed the plan he gave her. “This one meeting changed my life forever, as I [then] knew exactly what I wanted in my life and I had a clear direction. I tried to reach him many times over the years, and he said, call me once you reach your goals, and let’s meet again to set new goals. I loved his confidence, wisdom, and drive, and in my heart, I started to feel emotions towards him as he was guiding me, and giving me advice, to protect me in this industry,” Megan says.

After achieving all of her goals, they reconnected, and began working together more. “During dinner one evening, he looked into my eyes, and said, ‘I want to tell you what I want’ with complete confidence. He said, ‘My ultimate goal in life is to have a soul mate who connects with me on every level, and I want to tell you that I’m going to marry you,’” Megan says. She fell into his

arms—it was love. Today, they live, travel, and work together, and Megan says she cannot live without him. “He gives me unconditional love and I’m so grateful as he completes me in every area of my life. For me, waking up to his face is my sunlight. There were some moments in my life when I doubted the fairytale that I had had in my head since I was a little girl. I dreamed about a Prince Charming that would come into my life, hold my hand, guide me, protect me, stay by my side and love me unconditionally. I started to think that this kind of person only exists in Disney movies. But then it happened for me.

The day he told me that he is going to be my partner in everything, I started to blossom like I had never before. I can confidently say that the reality of love is even better than any fairy tale. After meeting my fiancé, I have been trying to encourage everyone in my life to place more faith in love. The advice about love that I would give to other women is to always communicate and stop any distance from forming. Don’t let things build up, it’s much better to get it out.

We have rules. No matter what happens, we should *always* sleep next to each other and always make love and have the ultimate intimacy. We can have a disagreement about something but that doesn’t have to carry over into every other conversation we have. We deal with every subject separately. We make effort to look good for each other, no matter what mood we are in. We have a true soul connection. The secret to keeping our romance alive is that we give love and pleasure to each other everyday! In our relationship we are both blessed by God to have our six core human needs met, which are certainty, variety, significance, love and connection, growth and contribution. I believe that men and women complete each other so I like to think

that being a feminist means that you can succeed in your career to your highest potential while also having a loving relationship,” Megan says.

Outside of her emotional health, Megan is passionate about making sure the rest of her health (from the inside out) is always in good shape as well—and like everything else in her life, she’s all about customising things so that they are right for *you*. “My health is my number one priority and I am all about customization. I follow the diet and workout plan by my amazing doctor, professor Robert Huizenga. I have a great personal trainer. I train four times a week. I love hiking, swimming, kickboxing and dance. I also work with a professional nutritionist.”

“I love ab exercises and I do a hundred crunches three times a day, every day. During a typical workout, I usually start with 20 minutes of cardio, either on the bike or the elliptical trainer. Then I focus on waist-whittling exercises and abs. My genetic test results indicated that I should focus on endurance exercise so I take dance and spinning classes regularly. I really wanted to like hot yoga and tried it for three months but it wasn’t for me. I drink water all day long starting as soon as I wake up and until I go to bed. It’s really important for me to follow a healthy, balanced diet so I cook at home every day. I eat a lot of leafy greens, non-starchy vegetables and fresh fruits, lean protein and fish, and whole grains. I also take vitamins and supplements daily including

iron, magnesium, Omega XL and Vitamin C,” she says.

Megan cannot stress the importance of understanding what works for your body enough—this, she claims, is the life-changing secret to achieving your ideal state of health, beauty, and more, from the inside out: “One universal truth is that knowledge is power, especially when it comes to health. I cannot stress enough how important it is to get a genetic test so that you have a full understanding of any future health risks. Also, you can create a suitable diet and exercise plan based on the results. Three companies that I highly recommend for genetic testing are 23andMe, 23andMe, 23andMe and Illumina. Anne Wojcicki is the CEO and co-founder of 23andMe and she’s one of my biggest role models in the genetic testing world.”

Life is pretty rosy for Megan, then, but she’s not ready to rest on her laurels just yet. For starters, she’ll be spending a lot more time in the UAE, working with local brands in the GCC and essentially being Dubai’s ambassador on the red carpet in the lead-up to the Expo 2020. She also hopes to continue her journey in the film industry, hoping to one day write, produce, direct, and act in stories that will inspire and heal the world: “I would like to win an Oscar, a Grammy and an Emmy as well as use my platform to build a bridge between the health, wellness and beauty industries and Hollywood. I would like to build the first business that gives people customised health, wellness and beauty products with the click of a button.” •



I think that being a feminist means you can succeed in your career to your highest potential while also having a loving relationship



Flute-Sleeved Blouse: Ginger at
Namshi.com. Velvet Cami Top:
Mango at Namshi.com. Suede
Peplum Midi Skirt: Beach City
(beachcity.ae).



Print Tee: MinkPink at Namshi.com. Ruffle Asymmetrical Checked Midi Skirt: Sister Jane at Namshi.com. Velvet and Pearl Choker Necklace: Fallon at Boom and Mellow (shopboomandmellow.com). Peep Toe Cut-Out Ankle Boots: Call It Spring at Namshi.com.



Spectrum One-Piece Bodysuit in Champagne (layered underneath): Slate Swim at StyleDrifter Shop (shop.styledrifter.com). Mesh Panel Body (layered on top): Topshop at Namshi.com. Pleated Maxi Skirt: Endless Rose at Namshi.com. Gold Collar Necklace and Ring Collar Necklace (layered): Vanina at Boom and Mellow. (shopboomandmellow.com). Raw and Golden Pyrite Necklace: Seraphine Designs at Boom and Mellow (shopboomandmellow.com). Brass, Pearl and Turquoise Rings: Caroline Najman at Boom and Mellow (shopboomandmellow.com). Bracelets: Model's Own. Flower-Filled Book: Forever Rose (foreverrose.ae).



Bead and Sequin Dress: Yousef Aljasmí. Ascella Headband: JY Jewels at StyleDrifter Shop (shop.styledrifter.com). Gold Gauze Veil: Stylist's Own. Bracelets: Model's Own.

Makeup: Angelique Turner (angeliqueturner.com).
Hair: Denny Clements (dennymakeup@yahoo.com).
Concept, Styling, Prop Sourcing & Shoot Direction: Yi-Hwa Hanna.
Assistant: Alicia McBride.



