

Cutting Loose

With a background involving everything from jazz and ballet to military training, Canadian musician Kiesa knows a thing or two about how to keep her energy levels soaring

By Yi-Hwa Hanna

To watch Kiesa Rae Ellestad perform is a little bit like being hypnotised: Not only does her unique style of dancing keep viewers captivated, her electrifying voice and seemingly endless wells of energy are contagious. It's little wonder that she's a brilliant dancer—with a background in tap and jazz dance performance, she also trained as a ballerina and has served in the Royal Canadian Navy. It was there that she discovered her true knack for singing and, by 2014, she was globally recognised as the breakout star of the summer. We sat down with the 26-year-old powerhouse after her recent performance at RedFest DXB to find out what keeps her smiling.

How do you like to keep fit?

Capoeira! It's amazing because it works out the whole body and it gives you this community that you get to work out with. I also find it works out your mind, too, because there's a lot of strategy involved in doing it, so I've been practising that for a couple of years now. Nothing has gotten me in better shape as quickly as capoeira.

Would you ever want to maybe create your own workout based on your unique dance routines?

Oh for sure, it's such a workout! Even with the [jerky moves], there are certain moves that if you do them for more than 10 seconds you're sweating. That would be really fun!

Why do you love dancing so much?

It's just fun—I always wondered, 'Why is dancing fun, why do we enjoy it, sticking our arms out to the beat'—but it just is! People love rhythm and I just like having fun every day, so adding dance to every day is always a bonus for me.

What did you think of Arabic food?

I've really noticed the flavour here—there's way more flavour in the food here than in many other places that I go. I love it, it's amazing.



What's your favourite healthy food?

I love sashimi and raw fish, and I'm such a salad person. I eat tons of vegetables. I'm very healthy!

Do you have any favourite artists or songs at the moment?

I'm a huge fan of Bruno Mars and *Uptown Funk* that Mark Ronson did with him—I've been waiting for funk to come back, and I've wanted to maybe even do some funk myself, and they're totally bringing it back. I really respect that. Funk is just really happy music—it makes you so happy to hear it, you can also dance along, and you also get a live band with it.

We've noticed that you rocked a few pairs of shoes from the new Reebok Classics range during this trip—the collection seems to be very much in line with your retro style aesthetic! What did you enjoy about working with them, and do you have any favourite pairs from this line?

I don't have any direct affiliation with them, but I just love them by default—it's Reebok! From this

collection, I really like the black and white pair, and the mint green pair.

Would you ever see yourself maybe designing a collaboration line with them, or a line of your own?

Yeah, I already have so many Reebok shoe design ideas, I'm just waiting! [Laughs] If they want me to design shoes, I'm ready to go!

What would be your dream city to perform in?

I don't like to say that one city is better than another, because I like going and performing in different places and experiencing different audiences. But I've always wanted to experience Japan. I don't know why, but I just feel like it would be a huge culture shock, and I'm all for completely new experiences. But Dubai is someplace I've actually always wanted to visit, so the fact that I [was here] is amazing.

Kiesa is a long-time "Friend of Reebok." The new Reebok Classics shoe collection—including Kiesa's favourites—starts from Dhs425.