

WORDS EVE BARLOW

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In the week that her fifth – and most candid – album is released, Annie Clark, aka St Vincent, discusses the complications of dating supermodel ex Cara Delevingne – and why she doesn't care if you think her songs are about their relationship

'Cara and I will always be friends'

'THIS IS JUST ME...' says Annie Clark, better known as St Vincent, over breakfast in a small Thai cafe in West Hollywood. 'I've never wondered who Tom Waits was singing about on *Big Black Maria*. I've never wondered who Leonard Cohen was singing to in *I'm Your Man*. And if I knew, it wouldn't help my enjoyment of the song.'

Ahead of the release of her fifth – and arguably best – album, *Masseduction*, Annie is launching her defence to anyone who might suggest that its confessional tracks are about her private life. Namely, an 18-month affair with Cara Delevingne and/or a shorter dalliance with Kristen Stewart following their break-up last year.

'There are certainly codes and references, stuff that's my own internal language,' she continues. 'But I firmly believe that it doesn't help anyone's enjoyment of the song to know my intention behind it.'

That's fair. Except, you don't use your ex's voice for the chorus of one of the tracks (*Pills* features Cara's) if you don't want to draw attention to that wider narrative. 'I knew it couldn't be my voice,' explains Annie matter-of-factly. 'Cara has a beautiful voice. It's just so pure. It's a sonic extension of who she is.'

They remain friends – 'always and forever' – and Cara 'loves' the album. 'I definitely credit being around her for that expansion in my chest,' she says, clutching herself. 'This is me at my most literal. It's always been me, but the code was a little harder to crack. I was less comfortable being deeply sincere.'

Today is Annie's 35th birthday. She

enters this unassuming café through the back door, sunglasses on. In a Natasha Zinko trench coat, holding a Chanel bag and always speaking with arms folded, Annie produces sentences like she's putting a jigsaw together – meticulous about how much she wants to reveal. She admits to a naivety about the amount of attention that a relationship with a supermodel would attract. 'I'd never experienced anything like paparazzi following you in a high-speed chase down the streets of London,' she says. 'Not being able to walk down the street put a whole host of complications into [the relationship]. Cara's so kind and sincere that it didn't seem that her spirit was corrupted by it.'

Masseduction will likely earn St Vincent new listeners: either from the knock-on

effect of her notoriety by association with Cara, or – you hope – from the merits of her most ambitious work yet. For it, she chose to work with Jack Antonoff (who's also worked with Taylor Swift and Lorde) – perhaps a sign of a desire to harness a larger audience, to go pop.

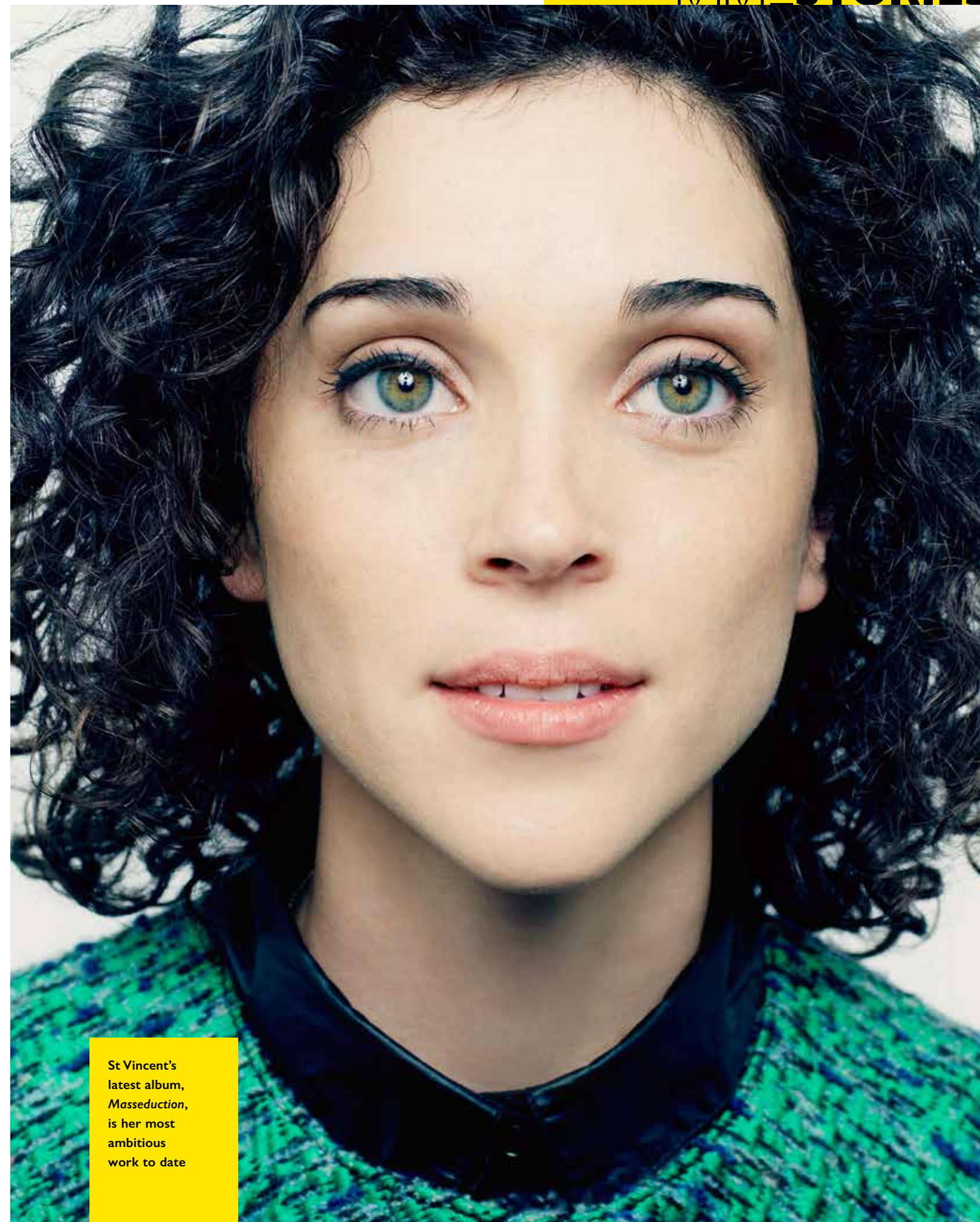
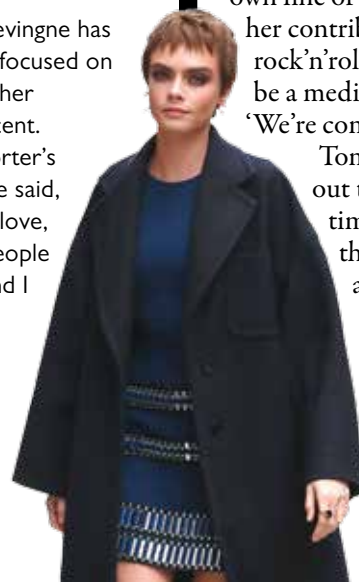
During the writing and recording of the album, Annie (who lives between LA, New York and her home state of Texas) decided to move into the Marlton Hotel in Greenwich Village. It became the most productive period she's ever had. She wrote film scripts, which would lead to her directorial debut for short film *The Birthday Party*, released last February, and soon she'll be working on a movie adaptation of *The Picture Of Dorian Gray* with Lionsgate. 'I just want the EGOT, you know?' she jokes, referencing an Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony home-run.

Critical appraisal and fortune aside, Annie also wants to revolutionise. Her own line of custom guitars is one of her contributions to de-gendering rock'n'roll. 'It's not a great time to be a mediocre dude,' she says firmly. 'We're coming for you.'

Tomorrow, she'll leave LA to set out to tour the album. For the first time, she gets properly animated thinking about it. 'The music is absolutely the most important thing,' she says. 'That might be idealistic, but I firmly believe that art changes the world. It's as necessary as food and shelter. It's my religion.'

Cara opens up

Meanwhile, Cara Delevingne has revealed that she has focused on being alone following her break-up from St Vincent. Speaking to Net-A-Porter's *The Edit* last week, she said, 'I relied too much on love, too much on other people to make me happy, and I needed to learn to be happy by myself... It took me a long time.'



St Vincent's latest album, *Masseduction*, is her most ambitious work to date

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