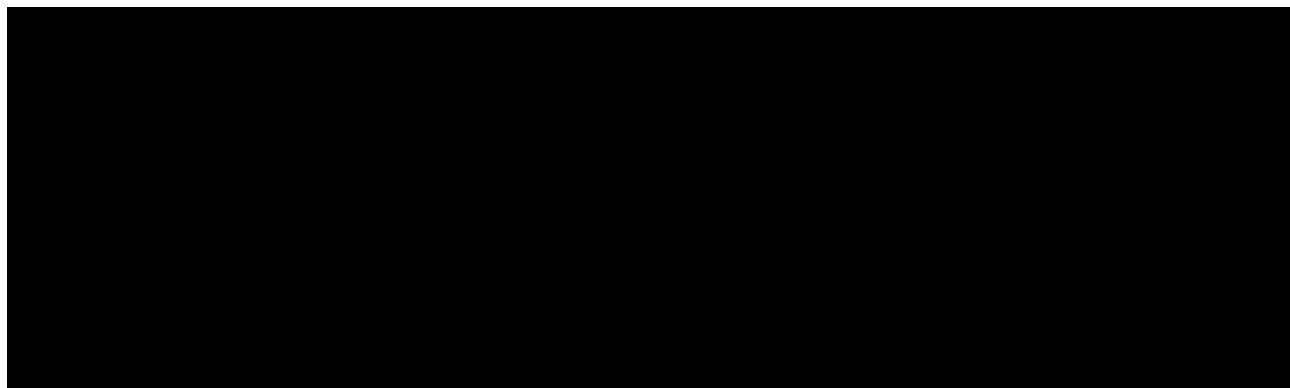


THE  
GILDED ERA OF  
BALQUEES

MUSIC. FASHION. MOTHERHOOD. A NEW LOVE.  
BALQUEES REFLECTS ON HER STRATOSPHERIC CAREER  
AND THE THINGS THAT MAKE HER HAPPY

Words Basma Faramawy Photography Luc Braquet Styling Cedric Haddad

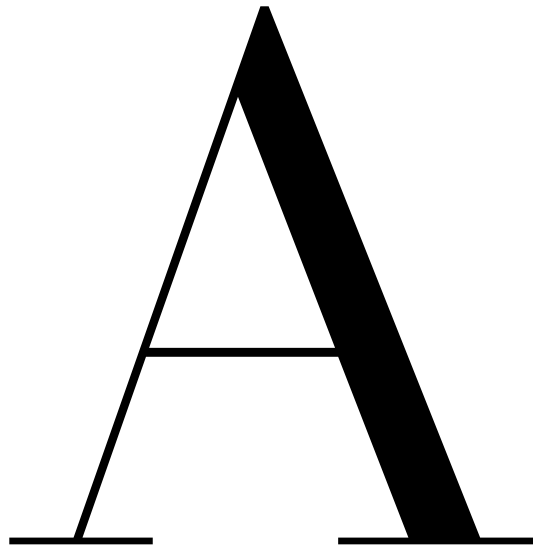




Full look, Georges Hobeika



Full look, Balmain



As the cameras flash, Balqees Fathi commands the set with an effortless grace that belies the avant-garde nature of a Prada dress that seems brought from the future. Wearing a short wig that makes her almost unrecognisable, she embodies the perfect fusion of fashion and artistic expression. The unique setting serves as a fitting backdrop for a woman who has made a career out of defying expectations. For Balqees, this *Vogue* cover is just another day in the life of an artist known for smashing stereotypes and redefining the image of the modern Arab woman. With her powerful voice and captivating presence, the 36-year-old trailblazer has been setting new standards in the Middle Eastern music industry and beyond. From being the first female artist to sing live in Saudi Arabia after a 40-year concert ban to performing in front of 450,000 people at MDLBeast, Balqees has consistently pushed boundaries and revolutionised what it means to be an Arab artist on the global stage.

Born into a family steeped in musical tradition, Balqees's journey to stardom was almost predestined. "During my childhood, music was always in our house given the fact that my mother used to be a singer, but she quit her career to raise a family. My father, Ahmed Fathi, is also a renowned musician, so music is in my blood," she shares. This early exposure helped shape her musical ear, laying the foundation for her future career. "I remember musicians coming to my house, playing their instruments whilst my father played the oud," she shares, her eyes lighting up as she recalls these formative experiences. But despite the musical environment at home, Balqees's path to becoming a professional singer wasn't straightforward. "I didn't study music formally. I wasn't allowed. There was a big controversy between my father and mother," she reveals. "My mother foresaw how hard this job would be, especially for a female. She wanted me to be like her: a housewife and mother – which I don't mind at all. If you ask me now, I would love to be a housewife raising kids." Instead of starting off with singing, Balqees pursued business and marketing, earning both a bachelor's and master's degree before fully committing to her musical career. "My father always saw this talent inside me," she says. "He knew it would distinguish me in the Arab music scene. He always wanted that for me."

Balqees's vibrant background significantly influenced the musical style she has become famous for. "My identity is a beautiful blend of Yemeni heritage and Emirati upbringing. Born and raised in Abu Dhabi with Emirati citizenship, I proudly represent the UAE. But I love singing in the Yemeni dialect. Yemeni culture is thousands of years old, so it offers rich musical inspiration," she explains. "Equally, the Emirati heritage, with its values and artistic legacy, also shapes my sound." This unique fusion allows the singer to create music that bridges ancient traditions with contemporary expressions, reflecting the diversity and cultural wealth of the Arabian Gulf. Balqees's debut in the industry was nothing short of spectacular. She credits Mohammed Al-Marzouqi, then head of the Doha Song Festival, for giving her first big break. "His complete belief in me set the stage for an extraordinary career debut," she recalls, referring to her performance at the tribute concert for poet Prince Badr bin Abdul Mohsen. There, she shared the spotlight with established artists, captivating an audience that included royalty from across the Middle East.

As her career soared, Balqees's personal life also took centre stage. In 2016, she married Saudi businessman Sultan Bin Abdullatif in one of the Middle East's most extravagant weddings. The lavish ceremony, held beneath the iconic Burj Khalifa, reportedly cost over AED 10 million, garnering widespread attention across the region. The event, which featured a diamond-encrusted wedding gown adorned with 24,000 crystals, was a star-studded occasion. However, the fairy-tale marriage ended in a volatile public divorce, which Balqees describes as "an inevitable evil...As big as that wedding was, the divorce was just as big," she reflects candidly. This personal upheaval became a source of inspiration for her album *Hala Jadida (A New Situation)*, where every song was influenced by her personal experiences. "2021 was a new era for me. I released the album and it was me telling my stories. That's what got the public interested in my personal life," believes the singer. But the album's success came at a cost, as she found herself struggling to maintain boundaries between her public and private lives.



Top, skirt and belt, Rabanne.  
Necklace, ring and earrings, Messika



Motherhood has been a transformative experience for Balqees, bringing both joy and challenges. “Balancing my musical career and personal life, especially as a female and a single mother, is a triple dose of work and pressure,” she admits. Her son, Turki, now approaching seven, has become her primary focus, influencing all of her decisions and priorities. “Experiencing every moment of my son’s growth is priceless to me. I’m determined to be present for each phase of his life, even if it means making sacrifices in my career. It’s a delicate balance, but one that I’ll navigate with purpose and love, making sure that my success never overshadows my role as a mother.” Balqees is passionate about protecting her son’s privacy and ensuring he has a normal childhood in spite of her fame. “While most influencers or celebrities showcase their lives, I believe that it’s better for the mental and physical health of our kids to keep [their personal moments] away from the public eye,” she asserts. “Fame shouldn’t be forced on children. They’re too young to choose, and it’s unfair to impose that burden on them.”

Her own fame may be rooted in her musical acumen, but over the years has extended to her approach to fashion too. The singer has undergone a sartorial evolution, marking a striking transformation from classic elegance to daring trendsetter. Initially favouring modest, traditional ensembles, Balqees now embraces bold designs, vibrant colours and avant-garde silhouettes. One such moment was her appearance at the Red Sea Film Festival in 2022, wearing a custom-made, royal blue Versace dress designed by Donatella Versace herself. Speaking exclusively to *Vogue Arabia*, the legendary designer praised the singer, saying, “Balqees is stunning. She is so sure of herself, strong and gorgeous. She truly is a modern Versace woman.” Turning into a regional fashion force, Balqees is now a regular at Paris and Milan fashion weeks, seen on the front rows at shows such as Balmain, Balenciaga and Giambattista Valli.

The singer’s career has been marked by several significant turning points. “Performing with Andrea Bocelli in 2016 and with Alicia Keys in 2021 was a merging of East and West. It was a message to the world: ‘Don’t underestimate Arab artists’. We have great potential and we are capable,” she states proudly. Her groundbreaking performances in Saudi Arabia and her participation in the 2022 World Cup in Qatar further cemented her status as a pioneering artist in the region.

Envisioning her path ahead, Balqees stands ready to seize new opportunities in the form of her own make-up and skincare

brand, Bex Beauty. “The idea came about in 2019. I was always asked what kind of foundation I use. So I thought to myself, Why don’t I create and curate a brand for Middle Eastern skin tones,” she explains. She is also an ambassador for Guerlain, a role that goes beyond a typical brand partnership as she shares a deep and personal connection with the iconic French fragrance house. “Guerlain is my family,” she says, emphasising her long-standing affection and trust in the maison that predates her official ambassadorship. For her, Guerlain represents more than just luxury fragrances; it’s an integral part of the singer’s wellness routine, offering a sensory escape from the demands of her busy life. She particularly appreciates how Guerlain’s diverse range of scents accompanies her throughout the day. “I love to start my day with Eau de Lingerie – it’s soothing and refreshing. To me it’s the smell of the morning breeze.” During the day, she favours the bright notes of Neroli Outrenoir and for the evening, she turns to the deep and opulent Oud Khôl. In 2024, Balqees made her mark as the first Middle Eastern member of Maison Messika’s prestigious circle of friends, solidifying her status as a global fashion icon and cultural bridge builder. This year, she appeared as the face of the brand’s Ramadan 2025 campaign, titled Connecting Light and Sound.

Looking to the future, the singer is excited about the possibility of international collaborations. “I always ask myself, What’s next, what would make you happy? I’ve done so much. The answer is always to go international, collaborating with names like Taylor Swift, Beyoncé and Ariana Grande, as well as K-pop groups like Black Pink,” she says. On a personal level, Balqees is ready for a new chapter. “I’m considering getting married and making a family again. I’m young, I’d love to have more kids and live the housewife life,” she reveals. Currently in a new relationship, she approaches this era with the wisdom gained from past experiences. “My previous marriage taught me a lot of lessons, but the best thing to do is to move forward and learn from them.”

In this new phase of her life and career, Balqees continues to reinvent herself while staying true to her roots. Her journey from a young girl surrounded by music to an international star and entrepreneur is a testament to her talent, determination and the power of staying grounded in one’s values. As her journey continues to unfold, promising new melodies, fresh beginnings and a harmonious blend of career and family life, one thing is clear: Balqees’s symphony is far from over, and the world eagerly awaits her next note. ■

“IT’S A DELICATE BALANCE, BUT ONE THAT I’LL NAVIGATE  
WITH PURPOSE AND LOVE, MAKING SURE THAT MY  
SUCCESS NEVER OVERSHADOWS MY ROLE AS A MOTHER”



Top and trousers, Zuhair  
Murad. Rings, ELTRD



Dress, Oscar de la Renta.  
Earrings, Messika



Full look, [Dolce & Gabbana](#)

“BALQEES IS  
STUNNING. SHE IS SO  
SURE OF HERSELF,  
STRONG AND  
GORGEOUS. SHE  
TRULY IS A MODERN  
VERSACE WOMAN”  
DONATELLA VERSACE



SENIOR FASHION EDITOR: MOHAMMAD HAZEM REZO, VISUALS EDITOR:  
JODY FATHALLA, DIGI TECH: WILL BEAGH, PRODUCTION: EMILY LUCAS



Top, trousers, earrings and rings,  
Versace. Bracelets, ELTRD

HAIR: ILHAM MESTOUR, MAKE-UP: JEAN  
KAIROUZ, NAILS: BEDASHING BEAUTY LOUNGE.  
SHOT ON LOCATION: HOUSE OF HYPE