



My Life

Alexandra Burke

She won the fifth series of The X Factor and is now visiting Yorkshire twice in The Bodyguard and Sister Act. Catherine Scott reports.

Growing up Alexandra Burke idolised Whitney Houston. The fact she is now playing Rachel Marron, the role made famous by Houston in the film *The Bodyguard* is not lost on the *X Factor* winner.

“When I first got the role in the stage version of *The Bodyguard* I used Whitney Houston as my inspiration but I didn’t want to mimic what she did with Rachel Marron. I wanted to give it my own spin,” says Burke.

“A lot of the audience who come to the show weren’t even born when the film came out and many have never seen it.”

Burke, 27, is on a busy schedule. *The Bodyguard* is at Leeds Grand from next week until the end of the month. Burke leaves the show at the end of June and is then straight into her next touring musical *Sister Act* which sees her back at Leeds Grand in August in the show directed by Craig Revel Horwood.

“Things are pretty hectic,” she admits. “We have already started rehearsals for *Sister Act* while still touring with *The Bodyguard* which is pretty full on. I have to remember whether I am Rachel Marron or Deloris van Cartier, but the characters are so different its not really a problem.”

Burke shot to fame when she won the fifth series of *The X Factor* which lead to a string of hits.

It was her second attempt at the show after she just missed out on the finals after Louis Walsh decided not to put her through. But, she says, it taught her a valuable lesson.

“It is tough when you are rejected like that and it takes a lot of courage to go back and put yourself through it again. But it was my mum who made me do and it really did show me that if at first you don’t succeed try again.”

Burke’s mother is Melissa Bell, the lead singer of Soul II Soul, and as such Burke grew up surrounded by music.

“I had wanted to be an actress as well but I had to concentrate on my music, which is why I am really enjoying doing musical theatre now,” says Burke who received a Best Newcomer award for her portrayal of Marron. But she is also looking forward to getting back to her music career.

She has a third album ready to come out as soon as she has finished touring with *Sister Act*, followed hopefully she says, by a tour.

Burke has also been revealed as an ambassador for weight loss shake company Slim Fast after she lost 18lbs on the meal replacement plan.

Since November, when she started on the plan, she has dropped three dress sizes from a size 14 to an eight.

“My epiphany moment was when I flicked through Ibiza holiday pictures on the plane home, my heart sank. The weight crept on over time and I was increasingly aware of how I felt in my clothes and performing on-stage.

“It took a few moments to really tell myself it was time to do something about it.”

She follows in the footsteps of Bradford’s Kimberley Walsh as

ambassador for the brand.

LEEDS DATES

■ THE BODYGUARD, starring Alexandra Burke is at Leeds Grand from Tuesday May 10 to Saturday May 31.

■ She will then return in *Sister Act* from Monday, August 22 - Saturday, August 27.

■ Burke is not scheduled to appear in any matinee performances of either show.

■ For more information and for tickets for either show visit www.leedsgrandtheatre.com.



DOUBLE ACT: X Factor winner Alexandra Burke is appearing twice in Leeds in *The Bodyguard* and *Sister Act*