

BRIGHT LIGHTS, BIG CITY

UP-AND-COMER MIZUO PECK SPENDS THE SUMMER IN THE CITY THAT NEVER SLEEPS — AND FITS RIGHT IN.

Photographed by HEIDI HARTWIG

If New York City were a woman she would be Mizuo Peck: Equal parts the intriguing flirt and the street-savvy hustler, with looks that dazzle and confuse. A bit Japanese, a bit Irish and English, a bit Cherokee, and a healthy bit '50s knockout. If Peck doesn't smoke, she sounds like she does, but that doesn't stop her from being the queen of downtown karaoke. She's a romantic, a realist and a neighborhood kid, hitting her stride as a working actress in the city that never sleeps. This summer Peck reprises her role as Sacajawea in the epic blockbuster *Night At The Museum — Battle of the Smithsonian*, reunited with familiar faces Ben Stiller and Robin Williams, and united with newcomers Amy Adams and Hank Azaria.



KIKI DE MONTPARNASSE *hair*,
SAMANTHA PLEET *eyes*,
HEROES & VILLAINS *necklace*



HEROES & VILLAINS T-shirt, skirt and necklace (worn as a bracelet).
BIJULES ring

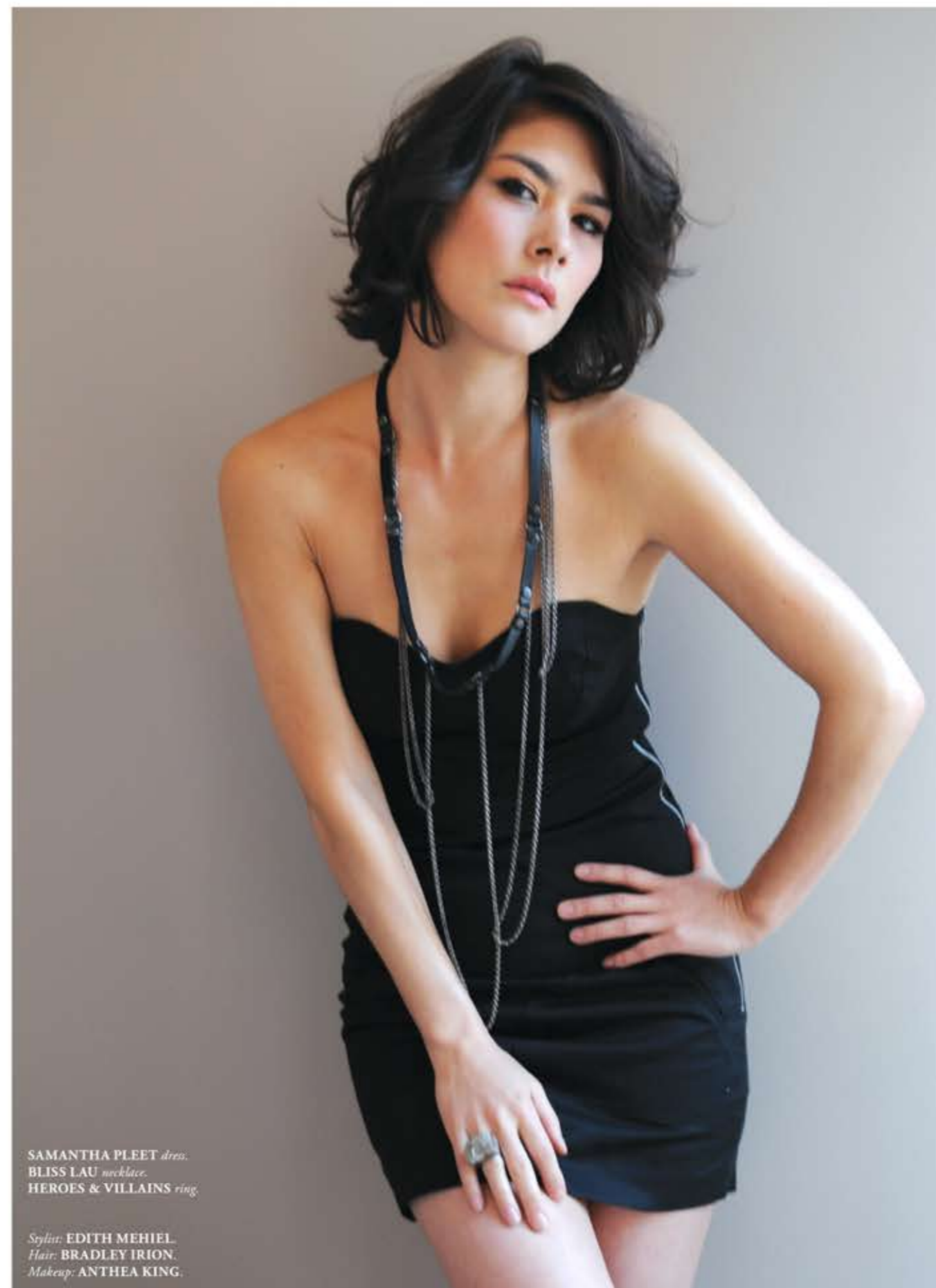
Peck is a self-professed costume junkie, parade lover and celebration maniac. From religious celebrations of all descriptions (including a Ukrainian "blessing of the basket thing where they build this awesome crazy weird basket with sculptures made out of butter and glass... I'm so into seeing what that is all about.") to NYC's annual Mermaid Parade, Peck is happy in full regalia, with a baton in hand and next to a steel drum. Despite the slight discomfort of her Sacajawea braids, working on both *Night at the Museum* films was a dream come true. Filming took place at both the Museum of Natural History and the Smithsonian as well as on a true-to-life set in Toronto. According to Peck, "The whole grand scale of the movie and magic of everything was just awesome, really amazing and incredibly beautiful." She likens working on the sequel to "going back to camp" and while her feminine side was moved by the sweet relationship between her character and Teddy Roosevelt (Williams), her street side had more fun with the stunt work which included fight choreography and archery. "It just felt really cool to be able to rehearse those types of things," Peck admits naughtily. "To go into a room with a padded floor and there are ten beefy dudes there ready to fight me. I'm hoping it will look really cool. And who doesn't want to look really cool kicking ass? That's kind of my dream moment."

That scrappy edge isn't reserved just for the big screen — she needed it growing up in Tribeca, walking down the middle of the street to avoid the rats coming out of the loading docks, and she needs it now as a working actress in New York. "I'm like every other New York actress: I'm doing the steps. It's always going to be a progression it seems," she says. "I'm going on auditions... Even people who are in huge movies still have to fight for the next job. You really have to have some serious perseverance because there are no guarantees ever, so you just keep trucking along. There's no arrival point." From musical theater at 11, to the Fiorelli LaGuardia High School of Music and Performing Arts, to College at SUNY Purchase for Theater, for Peck the journey is the destination, whether riding her bike to auditions in Manhattan or driving through the palm-lined streets of L.A. on the way to a studio. "When I go to L.A. it's

all about work. And that's a good feeling. I like that I can get out when the bubble gets too claustrophobic. I like to come home to New York. When you come home to New York after a long stay in L.A. you look at the piss on the street and the graffiti and you're like, 'I love this city!'"

For most of the world, New York is the epitome of a sophisticated metropolis. For Peck, being a native New Yorker is like being from a small town. She lives around the block from her old elementary school and waves to the same mailman she's been waving to her whole life. "I have so many memories of being shuffled around in my parents' life. Going to gallery shows and totally weirdo avant-garde stuff that you just soak in as a kid," she recounts. "My parents were these artsy bohemians and in the '70s they moved into a loft that was completely empty and they built everything. I basically grew up in a tree house. We had loft beds, a little bathroom with a screen door in the living room, a tire swing, green floors and chairs on the wall. Your typical artsy loft. Well, typical atypical." Growing up in such a creative environment, and in such a gritty town as New York, it's been second nature for Peck to immerse herself in the city's performing arts community. She's worked for the Tribeca Film Festival, participates in the performing arts cooperative Naked Angels and has taken part in the New York International Fringe Festival. "Being part of the Fringe Festival was one of those moments where you're like, yeah this is cool, underground, New York theater... and it's funky and rough around the edges and a really awesome experience."

With summer heating up Peck has her hustle on; likely either auditioning, promoting *Night At The Museum* or riding her bike around town. "Summer in the city is the best. You have to be here for a while to get used to the heat and humidity and the smell of Chinatown, but there's something so amazing and sensuous and great about being able to just wear your jean shorts and go to a rooftop party... there's nothing like it." Don't let her small-town-girl act fool you — Peck is just what savvy little girls want to be when they grow up: sugar, spice, and everything nice... emphasis on spice. **ERIKA MEHIEL**



SAMANTHA PLEET dress.
BLISS LAU necklace.
HEROES & VILLAINS ring.

Stylist: EDITH MEHIEL.
Hair: BRADLEY IRION.
Makeup: ANTHEA KING.