



AFTER HER BACK-TO-BACK PLATINUM ALBUMS SET THE WORLD ON FIRE, THE POP PHENOM SIENNA CAPPED OFF A WORLD TOUR, ONLY TO GHOST EVERYONE. TEN YEARS ON, WE CATCH UP WITH A WOMAN WHO GAVE IT ALL AWAY TO LIVE HER BEST LIFE.

**WHERE ARE THEY NOW?
THE
RUNAWAY
POP STAR**
Interview by Rachel Grant
Photos by FJ Culver

Ten years ago, there was at least a solid 36 month span where you couldn't go anywhere, in the entire world, without hearing the pop sensation **Sienna**.

Both her monster debut *Pink Rhapsody* & her frenetic follow up sophomore album *Supermassive* took the world by storm, reaching the rarefied status of triple platinum, back-to-back. Even as the industry itself continued along a steady decline. Tracks were getting played everywhere from little girls' birthday parties in Peoria to foam parties in the Balearics, as she dazzled everything from magazine covers to late night talk show appearances to even a few catwalks. The usually soft spoken midwesterner had gone from virtually unknown to nearly ubiquitous, in a very short amount of time.

"That's one of the truly crazy parts," The now 34 year-old begins, sitting back in her sturdy, teak beach lounger, stirring her afternoon maitai before taking a healthy swig. "Blowing up the way I did, most of the general public thought I just came out of nowhere. Poof! Overnight sensation! But I'd already been at it for what felt like forever at that point. Admittedly? I was almost a little exhausted with the idea of 'pop stardom' going in. Thus the affect." The tall, former idol says, her once iconic bleach blonde hair now seemingly a more natural darker tone, but still lightened by sunlight & a little coarser from saltwater. She, of course is alluding to her days as a member of the much more modest girl group "*Dream9*." Performing mostly in malls & fairs across the country in the early aughts, the four woman outfit got their closest brush with fame when their single "*(Let Me) Love You*" reached no. 23 on the pop charts before parting ways.

"[The group] was manufactured within an inch of its life. Girls were great, but we were under a lot of stress. Told who to be, what to say, what we could & couldn't do. Couldn't eat. I was explicitly told to be the cutesy, innocent one. '*Play Dumb*.' It was absolute hell on Earth. Nothing at all fulfilling. But I just had it in my head though, all warped: '*This is what you always wanted*.' So I kept psyching myself up. I was kind of grateful when they pulled the plug. It meant I could just go back to singing for me."

And for three more years, she did. "I was living in LA. And despite whatever the new label's PR tried to spin for sympathy, I was never as destitute as they said. I wasn't like living out of my car or anything. Things were tight, certainly, but I had a dayjob as a temp. And an apartment, with roommates. I wasn't busking for nickels & dimes, I was doing some vocal coaching stuff on the side & they found me at an open mic." Regardless of the PR, it didn't take long for industry execs to rediscover a then 23 year-old Sienna, looking to do things on her own terms. And so she was re-signed, his time, as a solo act with an edge.

"Admittedly, this time around, with a new label, things were a wee bit looser. I was allowed to be 'more myself.' She gesticulates the quotations with her fingers & a faint eyeroll. "At least... up to a point, anyway. But it

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wasn't like a casting call like the group. It kind of boiled down to them wanting me more than I needed them. It afforded me a little more honesty in the process." And so, Sienna came on the scene as the 'post-pop star' pop star. In a familiar bubblegum aesthetic, but sick & tired of all the bullshit. A little aloof, jaded by it all. The fame, the superficiality. "And it was... pretentious." She adds with a glib laugh. "I mean I don't want to crap on it too much. They were all real feelings I felt at the time. And I know they still resonate; a lot of fans still feel them now. But it kind of feels like its own gimmick to me, even now. Cheesy." Be it an angle or not, it was the most iconic part of her brand, & led to a chart-topping, meteoric rise.



THIS YEAR MARKS THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF SIENNA'S LANDMARK DEBUT PINK RHAPSODY

"[*Pink Rhapsody* dropped & we were off to the races. Zero to lightspeed." She looks off at the waves beyond the shade of the palms. "And for like the next few years, I didn't stop! Not once." All leading to the very public parts we do know, with single after single dominating the charts & whirlwind media appearances before going on tour. "We hit everywhere. Jakarta, Sydney, Joburg, all the way to like Anchorage. And I was coming up with the bulk of [*Super*]massive while on the road then, stressed & out of my mind. I came back, recorded that in the span of like seventeen days, which was frankly insane, only to have them turn around & almost immediately have me hit the road again."

And at a final show in Lisbon to cap off that second world tour, Sienna left fans with something of a cryptic goodbye. "*Until sometime very far down the road, when I'm happy again*." The star went on to deactivate all of her social media within the next few hours. And suddenly, Sienna went from being everywhere to nowhere at all.

"I want people to know, it was never as sudden as it might have seemed. Not some sudden decision the night of, like a lot of the theories online try to make it out to be." She explains. So what happened? The better part of a decade on, a maturer, much more womanly Sienna sits back in her beach chair, with a

bit of a creak & sighs, thinking through a measured, thoughtful response.

"People have this idea that if you're a pop star, you're some kind of diva. And while that's definitely true in a lot of ways, there's a lot of very important ways in which you don't get to call the shots! And that just serves to drive you crazy! It sets off this feedback loop of ridiculous behavior as a means to push back, only for that control to get more- It's rough. And I saw it happening to me. Saw what it was doing to my ego. And- I just wanted to make music."

And in retrospect, many similar themes are present in Sienna's sophomore album. Looking back now at what some critics have touted as 'the perfect pop album,' it's almost hard to avoid the undercurrent of a creative soul, at the end of her rope, struggling with that popularity & looking for an exit.

"There was this point, before hitting the road, during rehearsals for the choreography for the second tour, & I remember- it was wild. One day, I was really struggling. I had been up since 3am, did like four or five press hits, had then danced my ass off for another 5 hours & was being given this putrid chalky protein drink as "lunch," & I just started to crack. And I've luckily never experienced a panic attack, but the only thing that prevented me from the onset of what felt like one? I started looking back at my life. And- it just like- suddenly dawned on me. I just started finding all this catharsis in this idea that- I already did what I set out to do. I had already won! So it became easier to think of everything after that? More of as a victory lap. I mean the tour was certainly going to be a grueling, five continent victory lap."

Sienna goes on to explain she bought her private island retreat that very night, with the intention of fleeing to it immediately after the tour wrapped.

"I went into those performances with the idea they'd maybe be my last. Didn't really broadcast it, but I made sure to always give it my all, y'know?"

But while Sienna's departure from the public eye may have been in the works longer than anyone else might've realized, meeting her husband Marko was another story.

"It was just days before the end of the tour. I was taken to his one restaurant in Barcelona a few nights before everything wrapped. Hell, even then, we only met briefly by chance, & it was wild how much we just- got one another." Much like Sienna, Marko had gone through his own rapid rise to prominence in the culinary scene. But upon achieving his eighth Michelin Star, he too was similarly burning out in his own way, becoming a bit disenchanted with the world of fine dining. "The business side of things? The politics of not only each kitchen but between restaurants & owners & everything? They weren't for him, in much the same way the recording industry wasn't for me." Sienna explains. "And so that night, immediately after Lisbon, I decided to fly back to Barcelona on a whim. Like some total rom-com nonsense, I asked him to run away with me. And well- we've been living here on the island ever since. Happily ever after, as cliche as that sounds. Free to do what we want, whenever we want. Like get fat as hell!" She laughs, disarming the tension by noting the most obvious difference between her days in the limelight & now. But she does so without

an ounce of self-consciousness, almost sounding as if she relishes the change, as drastic as it is.

"I'm not about to act like folks are blind. Yes. I gained some weight. Loads in fact." She continues. "As a taller girl, I was never quite that heavy. But naturally, my body skewed more towards 'big-boned' I guess. Which was always just enough for the powers-at-be [with *Dream9*] to leave me with a bit of a complex. And while they might've been a tad bit more lenient with me later, when I was on my own, I didn't necessarily want to rock the boat either. I never quite starved, but adhering to such a strict diet certainly contributed to me being so miserable, for sure!" Sienna sighs what sounds like a contented sigh.

"Out here though? Who cares? It's just Marko & I. And Marko just loves keeping me well-fed. Very well-fed. And just what am I supposed to do? Tell one of the greatest living chefs on planet Earth 'no?' Are you nuts? Besides, living out here on our own, it's not like I'm just lounging around on my fat ass all day, everyday. I still end up doing an awful lot around here, what with tending to each of the ingredients we grow here, & hell, I'm always going for swims! Twice daily, at least. Inevitably, I just tend to yo-yo quite a bit. In fact, right now, it might not seem like it, but I'm actually a lot lighter than I've been in a while! Since our wedding day."

She volunteers what might be sensitive information to some, not only readily, but happily, genuinely. All in a way very much at odds with the detached 'mean girl' demeanor that made her a household name a decade ago.

"People change. I certainly have. And like I said, I accomplished all of the things I set out to do. Pretty early on too fortunately. And in the process, made enough to never have to go through any of the stressful parts that made things rough for me ever again. What I don't need is my ego locking me in that spot in perpetuity, you know? I'd rather move on to bigger & better things. Like living. Being true to myself & all that."

But does that mean she's done with making music?

"Who ever said I stopped?" She smiles wryly. "Sure, 'Sienna' T-M, the world-renowned pop star may not have released any new music in years, but who's to say I haven't found another outlet. Perhaps have a much more grassroots *SoundCamp* page with a small but devoted following?" She laughs facetiously. "But seriously, I'm still putting things out & it feels a lot more fulfilling too, honestly. I can do whatever the hell I want, experiment, do whatever. And I'd say only about half of my followers on there even made the connection that it's even me. While the other half that did seem to keep it quite nicely on the downlow while also not gatekeeping it as some kind of huge secret either. While it's brought in about a fraction of the revenue, it's infinitely more satisfying to me because it's so organic."

Almost as if on cue, Marko appears with two cups of parfait, with fresh berries the couple grew in their own greenhouse on the island & the most delectable cream in the world. Sienna cooes & eagerly dips her spoon.

"I know people talk about 'living your best life,' but like- C'mon! Are you kidding me? How could things get any better?!" She asks with an ear to ear beam before a large spoonful. ■