

IVY LEAGUE GIRL

**From Fresh Prince to freshman at Harvard,
R&B smash Tatyana Ali keeps her stardom in perspective.**

Tatyana Ali definitely doesn't live the life of an ordinary Harvard University freshman. Sure, the R&B star who became famous playing Will Smith's cousin on *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* lives in a dorm, takes a full course load and hangs out with friends around Harvard Yard. But on most weekends, you won't find Tatyana, 19, hanging around Boston; she's usually traveling to promote her debut album, *Kiss the Sky* (Epic). "It's crazy," she says. "Every two weeks I'll have a little breakdown, and I'll be like, 'This is insane.'"

Don't believe her? Consider this typical week: She attends class twice a day on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. On Thursday afternoon, she flies to Chicago to perform, then flies back that night to make a class on Friday. Then, she's back on a plane to San Francisco and Portland for more gigs, and finally returns to Harvard on Sunday night.

But even with her crazy schedule, Tatyana remains firmly grounded. Like most new students, she says she was a bit nervous about meeting her five roommates. She moved in days later than the rest because she was on tour, and she worried that they'd think she was a diva. But as soon as Tatyana showed up—carrying her own bags, with her mom at her side—her roomies knew she didn't want special treatment.

During her first semester at Harvard, Tatyana took Spanish, genetics, African-American studies and an expository writing class. She also joined a campus choir and

theater group and became a coxswain for the men's crew team. Like many college students, she stays up late listening to loud music. ("We have loud parties all the time," she admits.) And not surprisingly, she has trouble getting up for 9 a.m. classes. "I

basically roll out of bed in my sleep sweats, brush my teeth, wash my face, pick up my bag, go to class and then come back to my room and shower," she says with a laugh.

Tatyana credits her parents for her ability to balance college and a career. "In my family, college is what you do," she says. "My parents

were very supportive of what I did in the past, but if something had to go, it certainly wasn't going to be school."

Even though she's fully involved in campus life, Tatyana's roommates can't forget their friend is a celebrity. They all crowded around a TV to watch her and Will Smith present an award to Madonna at the MTV Video Music Awards last fall. "Madonna came up, and she kissed me on my cheek," Tatyana recalls. "I was, like, so excited. And my friends were too. We really did share it."

But will the Fresh Prince himself—who produced her debut album and lent vocals to the second single, "Boy You Knock Me Out"—ever pop by her dorm for a little hello? Tatyana shakes her head. "That would be insane," she says. "People would freak out. It would be a horrible scene."

Then she smiles. "Well, maybe he can come in for my graduation."

—Marc S. Malkin

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