

in the spotlight

Meryem Uzerli

THE TURKISH STAR WHO CAPTIVATED US IN 'HARIM AL SULTAN'

With over 25 TV and movie awards and nominations, the German/Turkish actress Meryem Uzerli has climbed the ladder of fame as a result of her role in the famous TV series *Harim Al Sultan* and she has become an unstoppable force. During the series, Uzerli's role 'Huyam' [Hurrem] managed to develop a love-hate relationship with her audience. We bring you all the details and secrets behind the daring star, Meryem Uzerli.

STYLING
Elmar Weppel

PHOTOGRAPHY
Urban Ruths

In 2010, the gorgeous actress was chosen for the historical television drama series *Muhteşem Yüzyıl 'Harim Al Sultan'* by Meral Okay, the series' screenwriter, and Timur Savcı, the series' producer, after an eight month search to find the best actress for this role. Uzerli explains that after she took on this role, she started living in Istanbul almost full time. However, Uzerli embraces and unites both her cultures, demonstrated by her two residences in Berlin and Istanbul.

You are now a big star in Turkey with

a huge following all over the Arab world, but tell us what inspired you to become an actress?

It happened rather naturally because I went to a special school from kindergarten onwards, where they support children's individual talents, and my teaching included a lot of artistic activities. It was a very creative place and I was a part of this environment since the age of three! And I soon realized acting was comfortable and exciting for me. I didn't think of acting as a profession to have when I grew up, it was simply a part of my daily life from the early years of my childhood onwards. During my teenage years, I was already engulfed

into the acting world because the father of a very close friend of mine was the owner of the biggest theatre in my town. Thus I had a very natural contact and association with actors, directors, scriptwriters and the stage from then on.

The Arab world fell in love with you when you played your role in *Muhteşem Yüzyıl (Harim Al Sultan)*, how do you feel about gaining such huge success in the Middle East?

I'm so grateful my work has been and still is so positive in everyone's mind. I would love, if I have the chance, to visit all the countries of the Middle East. I really ►



Dress by Elisabetta Franchi

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want to say thank you so much for all the warm and positive feedback I got. It's the biggest gift for an artist/actress.

Hurrem Sultan was a very complex role and difficult role to play, how did you feel while playing her?

While I was playing Hurrem, I put all my strength and energy in her personality. To give her the utmost respect, I did what I thought to be the best, I built up a character for her through my own interpretation, my own emotions and my personal connection with her soul.

It's not easy to embody a historical persona; did you feel any sort of pressure while seeking to portray her accurately?

When I went for the audition and got the role, at the time I didn't know much about Hurrem or Sultan Suleyman or the Ottoman Empire. It was all very new to me, and I had to work through it. I studied the period and read some books on the topic and thanks to the internet, I was able to get myself perfectly prepared for the role. But what was most important for me was to take whatever was written in the historical records, in books or online, and connect myself with her soul. I wanted to build up a character which allowed my

How was it behind the scenes of *Harim Al Sultan*? How was your relationship with the cast of the series?

We worked perfectly together. It was a great and friendly atmosphere on the set and we all supported and helped each other out. It was a long and intense period of filming during which many real friendships and strong bonds were formed. Some days were full of fun, whereas other days were more serious. But all in all it was an amazing and positive experience for all of us.

Of all the roles you have played in your career, which one is closest to your heart?

Every time I have played a character I was in the moment and totally involved, so I could connect to the character with my heart and mind fully. There was never a time when a character was less important to me, whether it was a main character or a smaller role. Every character and every role is unique and incomparable for me. ▶

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emotional creativity to come through, and not one that was based on history alone.

Can you imagine yourself being represented truthfully in a book written by someone centuries later?

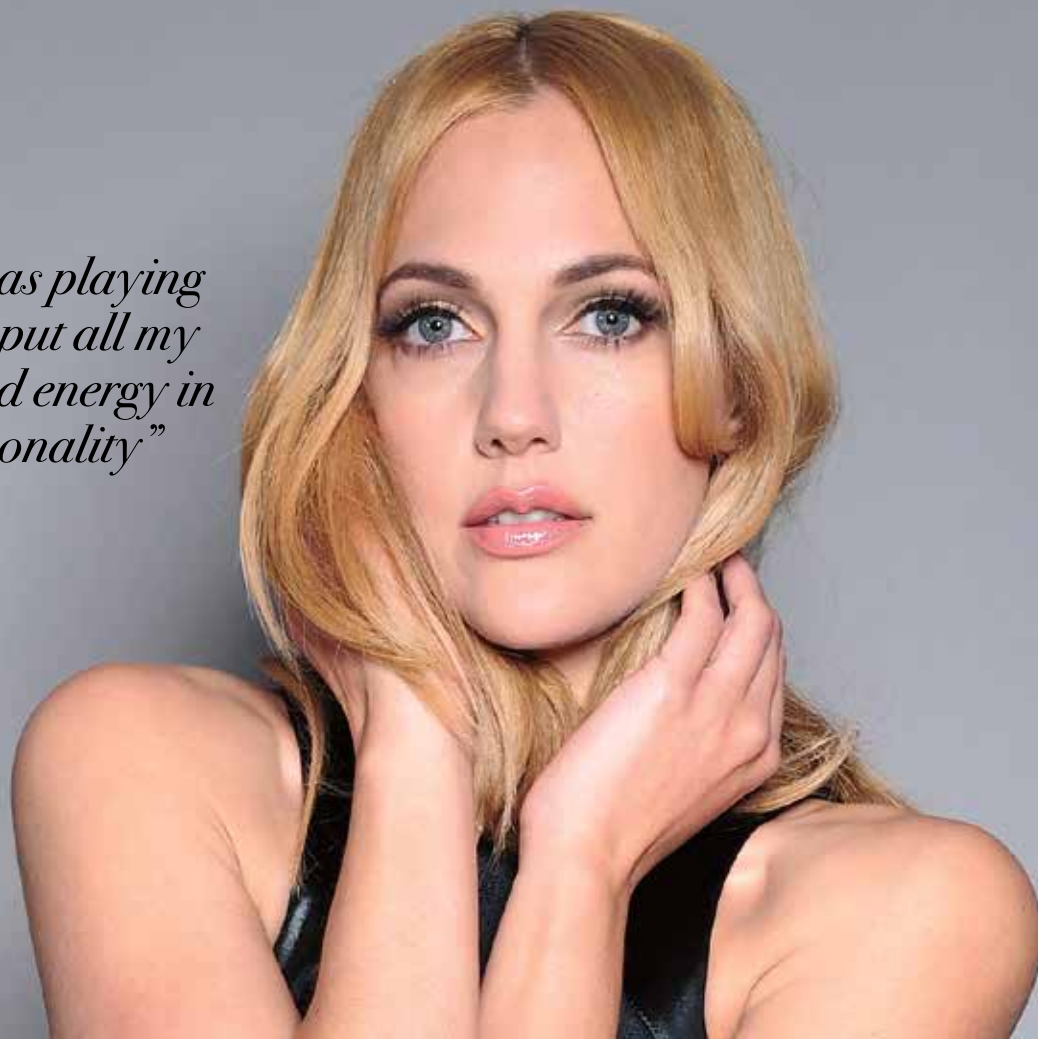
I think only Hurrem knew exactly what kind of a person she was. It was a huge challenge, so I worked closely with the screenwriter and director to create Hurrem's personality and stay true to her as much as possible.

Was there someone or some place that you drew inspiration from in order to play the role of Hurrem so skillfully?

I wasn't led by a clear inspiration from the beginning, it was more of a constant process which allowed Hurrem's personality to evolve every time we filmed.



“While I was playing Hurrem, I put all my strength and energy in her personality”



What are your upcoming projects?

I'm currently shooting an arthouse movie, which will be released in cinemas this winter. This month, I will start to film a new project with O3 and MBC for a new television drama. I'm sorry I can't give you more details at the moment but both projects are close to my heart and have great story lines. I'm really excited to see both these projects come to life! In the past two years, I also spent a lot of time with experts from the cosmetic industry to create my own exclusive MERYEM eye cosmetics range. At the moment I'm looking for distribution partners, especially for North Africa.

What are your future plans for your career? Do you plan to work in Hollywood someday?

Wherever a great story awaits me – it will be my pleasure to become a part of it!

People in the Middle East are very curious to know more about your real life personality. What are you like in your day-to-day life?

I really like to explore the area I live in and I'm a very down to earth and casual person at heart. You can usually find me in jeans, a t-shirt and sneakers! As for my hobbies, I like to jog, read biographies

and novels and I love watching documentaries. I also like listening to music (as you may know my sister is a well-established singer!), and I love trying new cuisines. But most of my free time I spend with my lovely daughter.

Speaking of your beautiful baby daughter, what is it like being a new mother?

It is the most wonderful part of a woman's life and I'm so grateful God gave me this experience. I hope and pray that my daughter will stay healthy and happy all her life. I want to take this opportunity to send my greetings to mothers all over the world, as I know understand this beautiful responsibility more than ever. To all the mothers out there: I'm proud of you and you have my utmost respect. In my eyes all mothers are holy beings.

Any last words for all your fans in the Middle East?

I wish you all a lot of love and happiness and I'm looking forward to meeting you all one day. I am very grateful and happy that you are enjoying my work. You support me every day with the great messages you send me and I want to thank you so much for your support.

ENIGMA QUESTIONNAIRE

Which five words do you associate with the most?

Chocolate, desire, sports, music and gratitude.

What is your most treasured quality?

Honesty.

What would you like to change most about yourself?

My impatience.

What qualities do you dislike in people?

Disrespect.

Who are your real life heroes?

My mother and my daughter Lara.

What's the most important lesson life has taught you?

Humility.

What's your biggest weakness?

Too much sugar – I can't get away from it!

What keeps you up at night?


Lara.

What makes you laugh?

Slapstick comedy and my daughter Lara.

What was your proudest moment?

Becoming pregnant and giving birth. ■

A full-body photograph of a woman with long, wavy blonde hair, wearing a white long-sleeved blouse with intricate lace detailing and a high collar. She is also wearing a knee-length, flared skirt with a bold black and white tiger print. Her hands are on her hips, and she is wearing black pointed-toe high heels. The background is a plain, light grey studio backdrop.

“To all the mothers out there: I’m proud of you and you have my utmost respect”

FASHION DIRECTORY

Hair & Make-up: Elmar Weppel