

A woman with her hair in a high ponytail, wearing sunglasses, a denim jacket, a black top, denim pants, and black heels, stands in a room completely filled with denim clothing. She is holding a shopping cart also filled with denim. The background is a wall of denim, and the floor is also covered with denim. The lighting is bright, highlighting the textures of the denim.

“Find as many things as you possibly can that you’re passionate about, pursue a lot of them, stick with the ones you’re somewhat good at and then try to make them all work.”

—*kira kosarin*

**KIRA KOSARIN**

@kirakosarin

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# the year of kira

Fresh-Faced  
and Fearless  
Kira Kosarin  
Is Giving  
Show Biz a  
Run for Its  
Money

WRITTEN BY: JORDAN NISHKIAN  
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## she may be known

for her four-season stint as superhero Phoebe on Nickelodeon's "The Thundermans," but since the show ended in May of last year, Kira Kosarin has begun to explore—and conquer—the industry on and off-camera. Never one to shy away from hard work or from showcasing her many gifts, Kosarin is turning heads and wowing the world with her can-do spirit and multifaceted talents. With a debut R&B album, an international album tour, a role in a HULU hit and a co-directed TV pilot episode under her belt in 2019 alone, it's clear that Kosarin is just getting started.



Coming from an incredibly gifted home, Kosarin attributes her interest in performing to her family, particularly to her composer uncle, her actress mother and her music director father. According to Kosarin, her whole family "did Broadway Theater in different capacities," and her early childhood is vividly marked with memories of watching them from the wings. "I grew up, basically backstage, watching my mom perform and my dad produce music and my uncle conduct—so I always knew I wanted to be in show biz."

"I specifically knew I wanted to do TV and film by the time I was 12," Kosarin continues. "I took a comedy acting class in Florida and I got hooked immediately." Young Kosarin's childhood continued to blossom with more memories of theater life, only this time she was the one taking a bow. "I had done regional theater in Florida, community theater, school plays and all that good stuff," she says, "and then this acting teacher who found me in Florida invited me out to LA for a summer workshop. I went, met my agent and sort of never left."

From there, Kosarin's name speckled the credits of various shorts and TV shows as small roles, but by the time she was 14, she had landed a leading role on "The Thundermans." "It's so hard to sum up what I learned on 'The Thundermans' because it was ages 14 through 20—I learned everything!" she explains. Her time as Phoebe Thunderman not only offered her an incredible, first-hand learning experience, but it also provided her with a network of amazing people and resources. "It set me up in every way; it set me up for directing and just being on-set. It set me up for how to have a full-time job at 14 years old and have people relying on my ability to, you know, be a responsible, adult human-being and do my work every day," Kosarin says with a smile. "We also traveled a lot for the show, so that was my opportunity to see the world for the first time, which was really cool."

Now as an adult, Kosarin wants to pay what she learned forward to the next generation of young talent. This summer, she worked with Camp Hollywood, a "summer intensive acting camp" put on by Kosarin's old acting school, to co-direct a pilot episode of "The Leners." Not only does this program build professional experience for its students, but it also creates short films for their reels. "When I first moved to LA, I did [Camp Hollywood] for three years before I booked 'The Thundermans,' and it sorta taught me everything I knew," Kosarin notes. Little did she know, Camp Hollywood would later re-enter her life to help her hone in her skills behind the camera. "I'd been shadowing sitcom directors all over the country for the past couple years kind of waiting for an opportunity to direct for real, and I got a call from the school saying 'Hey, Japheth Gordon is going to do our first sitcom, come direct for us,'" Kosarin recounts as an eager smile illuminates her face, "and I was like, 'Yes, yes, yes!'"

Kosarin was ready to accept this new role with all of its challenges, and building a sitcom pilot in 10 days from start to finish surely presented its own obstacles. "It's crazy because I wasn't just directing—I was in editing for seven nights and built the laugh-track from scratch. We actually built a sitcom in 10 days...and we were making it work as we go, trying to make it the best sitcom it could be. And it totally worked out," she says. "I'm really proud of it."

Co-directing "The Leners" pilot and being back with Camp Hollywood was an amazing experience, but for Kosarin, working with the next generation of talent was the highlight. "That's the whole reason I want to direct kids' shows," Kosarin explains. "There's so much that I wish people had told me when I was that age starting off, so to be able to see these kids literally, exactly at the same point in their journey as I was nine years ago, [I want to] try to interject with things that would have made my life easier back then."



“

“When I started writing music, it was a means of clarity. It was my diary. It was a way of articulating things that I couldn't figure out how to articulate any other way.”

—*kira kosarin*

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#### Have No Fear

• “When you first start performing, your body is going to know, it’s going to feel that adrenaline and give you a response,” Kosarin advises. “So your job is to take that feeling and consciously interpret it as excitement and anticipation, rather than nerves and anxiety.”



#### To All the Boys She’s Loved Before

• According to Kosarin, each Off Brand song is directly inspired by a prior relationship. She laughs, “There are only seven songs on this album, so if you were one of the boys who made it in there—even if we only dated for like, three weeks, you’re welcome.”



#### A Swift Learner

• The first song Kosarin learned to play on the guitar was “Our Song” by Taylor Swift. After picking her up from a voice lesson, Kosarin’s dad stopped in a guitar shop with her. At the time, she could already play the flute and piano, but he thought a guitar would be a better accompaniment for her vocals. By 5 p.m., Kosarin was back at home with her new guitar and a Taylor Swift songbook, and by 2 a.m. she had learned to play every song in the book.



#### 6lack and Blues

• One of Kosarin’s dream song collaborations would be rapper 6lack. “His features are just next-level,” she says.



“With the industry I’m in, there’s so much intersection of art and commerce, so it’s easy to lose the joy in the art that I’m making, and I find that rotating between different facets of my creative career keeps me going.”

—kira kosarin



While acting and directing are both paths she definitely plans on continuing to explore, her music career currently takes precedence. “Music’s kind of the number one true passion,” says Kosarin. Even though it meant the world to her, Kosarin made an active choice to not pursue music for a while. She felt what many of us feel when pursuing our passions—fear. There’s a fear that our dream will betray us and it won’t work out, or if it does work out, it becomes a career, which would strip the joy from it. “And to be quite honest,” Kosarin adds, “the industry threatens to take the joy out of music at every turn, but then, every once in a while, I get to be in a room with some really talented, creative people who remind me how wonderful it is to be in an environment where you can make things you’re really passionate about with other people who are equally as passionate and talented. That collaboration makes it worth it.”

When going through the seven songs in Kosarin’s *Off Brand* album, the passion in her voice is apparent, but upon closer listening, you hear the spirit of her words. Each song, from the upbeat confidence of “Area Code” to the sultry, confrontational nature of “Crazy’s Your Type,” takes on its own meaning. When you press play on her songs, you feel that you’re instantly transported inside an intimate conversation or eavesdropping on an emotional encounter—hearing words that, if merely spoken, would fall flat with the weight they carry. Instead, they come alive with her music—and this was exactly Kosarin’s intent. “When I started writing music, it was a means of clarity,” she explains. “It was my diary. It was a way of articulating things that I couldn’t figure out how to articulate any other way.”

Through *Off Brand*, listeners can directly hear and relate to how different relationships have affected Kosarin and how she worked through different emotions, such as writing “Wandering Eyes” and her single “Vinyl” when she was 16 and dealing with heartbreak. She wrote, and continues to write, experiences which are true to her.

“It’s funny; I really write music for me and for things that I need to say, and maybe for a person I want to say something to but I can’t, so I say it to an invisible version of them in a song,” Kosarin divulges. “The problem with that is that it wasn’t until I released my album that I realized, ‘Oh, wait—

other people also hear these lyrics and are now hearing my deepest, darkest secrets while listening to the radio.”

*Off Brand* is brimming with power and hyper-confidence, and Kosarin attributes that to her alter-ego, “Bad Bitch Kira,” who exudes sass and can speak unfiltered in a way Kosarin sometimes struggles with in real life. “A lot of [*Off Brand*] was to make me listen to that super-confident, sassy part of me,” Kosarin laughs. “Because in real-life, I’m super-nice!” (Totally true, by the way).

While her songwriting had its start as something therapeutic, Kosarin is ready to focus more on expression. “Now that it’s my job, I feel like [music is] a means for me to try on different versions of myself,” she says. “Each song emphasizes a totally different part of my personality, and being in rooms with other writers dramatizes those differences even more.” And with musical inspirations stemming from her “dad’s music,” such as James Taylor and the Eagles, from singer/songwriter-based artists like Colbie Caillat and Sarah Bareilles, and from the worlds of modern R&B, hip hop, trap and EDM with artist like SZA, Kehlani, H.E.R., Childish Gambino, Frank Ocean, Chance the Rapper and Bryson Tiller (whose Trap Soul majorly influenced *Off Brand*), there is so much more for Kosarin to delve into and explore.

That exploration isn’t just confined to music. While 2019 has shown endless promise for her music career after her album release, her *Off Brand* tour and her first performance at Slimefest in the UK, she has big plans to continue to broaden her horizons in other fields of interest. “With the industry I’m in, there’s so much intersection of art and commerce, so it’s easy to lose the joy in the art that I’m making, and I find that rotating between different facets of my creative career keeps me going,” Kosarin notes.

And she hopes to inspire others to do the same in their everyday lives. “Find as many things as you possibly can that you’re passionate about, pursue a lot of them, stick with the ones you’re somewhat good at and then try to make them all work,” she advises. “Keep planting seeds—you have more time than you think. Just keep training, keep getting better at all those things, look out for opportunities and keep working. I don’t know, man, wanting to do something creative is really tough, but if it works, it’s a really great way to live.” ■

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