

LET'S HEAR IT FOR Shakira

THE SINGER KNOWS WHAT IT'S LIKE TO STRUGGLE. SHE TELLS TIFFANY BAKKER WHY IT INSPIRED HER TO TAKE HER SUCCESS TO THE STREETS



THERE are a few things you probably think you know about Shakira. One: she's adept at shaking her hips. Two: she can belt out a tune with real force.

Three: in her biggest Australian hit to date, *Whenever, Wherever*, she talked strangely of not confusing her breasts with mountains.

Still, the 32-year-old Colombian superstar, whose single *She Wolf* is currently powering up the charts, is much more than that. When we meet at a beachfront hotel in her adopted home of the Bahamas (where she lives with her businessman boyfriend of nine years, Antonio de la Rúa) she's charming, open and quick to laugh. In person, she has that essence of somebody who enjoys life every day. She's petite and, dressed in skinny jeans and a silk flowing top, she's undeniably stunning.

Indeed, in a world where we've become accustomed to hard-partying divas falling out of taxis – at times without underwear – Shakira is genuinely concerned with larger global issues outside of her own world. Namely, providing education to disadvantaged kids in her volatile homeland of Colombia, where poverty, displacement and kidnapping are rife.

Shakira's Barefoot Foundation – which she founded in 1995, when she was just 18 – has given tens of thousands of impoverished kids an education and regular meals.

"To me, education is the magic formula,"



GRAZIA
EXCLUSIVE



says the singer, whose foundation has five schools. "It's a great tool to fight poverty and win the battle. In the First World, we take education for granted, but in Colombia and developing countries it's somehow a luxury for many when it should be a birthright."

Seeds of thought for the foundation were sown early, when Shakira was just eight, after her father's business went bankrupt. "It was a shock to me – we'd had a comfortable life until then," she says. "I was so frustrated and angry

"All these kids – mostly orphans – were sniffing glue, probably to deal with the hunger and solitude in their lives"

because I didn't know why my life was changing so drastically."

To show her there were others much worse off, Shakira's parents took her to a nearby park, where homeless kids would congregate and sniff glue.

"I remember it vividly. All these kids – most of them orphans – were sniffing glue, probably to deal with the hunger and solitude of their lives," she recalls. "My parents wanted to show me a reality that was much tougher than mine."

The singer made a promise to herself, even at that tender age, that if she ever found success (she reckons she knew at the age of four she felt "a calling" to perform) she would do something about her parents' financial situation, and the situations of those youngsters.

She's since been able to help her family, but it's seeing smiles on the faces of the children she supports through her foundation that gives her most joy. "I know that these kids are so much happier now; that they have something to hold on to and hope for in life. It just makes me complete," she says. "And even when I'm 70 and nobody wants to listen to me or pay attention to me, I can visit those kids and see what they were able to do with their lives because of the gift of education."

Right now, she's also excited about the release of *She Wolf* the album, which shows off an even dancier side to the star. "It's predominantly electronic, very upbeat and it's meant for the clubs," she says. "I really want people to have fun with this and enjoy the moment. There's a lot going on in the world, but there's a time also to just let go. Life is short and there are so many things to celebrate. You've just got to enjoy it." *She Wolf the album is out in October*

When she's not shaking it on stage, Shakira works tirelessly for children in Colombia

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY OF SONY MUSIC