

CHIQUIS

CARRIES THE TORCH

DETERMINED TO HONOR THE LEGACY OF HER LEGENDARY MOM, JENNI RIVERA, THE 29-YEAR-OLD CALIFORNIAN IS STEPPING INTO THE SPOTLIGHT ON HER OWN TERMS AND BLOSSOMING INTO THE WOMAN HER MOTHER RAISED HER TO BECOME.

BY ANGIE ROMERO PHOTOGRAPHS BY JACK GUY



ENTERING THE LATE JENNI RIVERA'S PALATIAL HOME,

in Encino, Calif., it's hard not to be reminded of her. The letters "JR" are engraved on the main door handles and inscribed on the marble floor in the entrance foyer. Butterflies—symbolic of her metamorphosis from a *Mariposa de Barrio* into banda's reigning queen—decorate the staircase leading to some of the mansion's seven bedrooms. Within these walls, it's impossible to forget how hard the daughter of Mexican immigrants in Long Beach, Calif., worked to achieve the American Dream and to build a trans-generational empire.

No one is more aware of the hardships and triumphs than *La Diva de la Banda*'s eldest daughter, Janney Rivera, the blossoming singer who is better known by the nickname her uncle gave her: Chiquis. If Jenni, who had Chiquis at age 15, was the queen of regional Mexican music, then Chiquis was the obvious heir to her mother's throne. But instead of applauding Chiquis for launching her own career as an artist, many die-hard Jenni fans dislike the idea of her daughter stepping into the spotlight.

Chiquis emerges from a room next to the kitchen, makeup-free and hair pulled back in a messy bun. It's far from the glam image we're used to seeing on social media, where she touts more than 3 million followers, but it's unfiltered and real—two of the qualities that make her so endearing to fans who collectively call themselves the Boss Bee Nation. "Sorry to keep you waiting," she says warmly. "I just came back from a cycling class and finished my meditation."

Chiquis, 29, is remarkably similar to her mother—from her beautiful curves down to her mannerisms. Having served as consigliere in Jenni Rivera Enterprises, a multimillion-dollar company encompassing music, TV, clothing, fragrances and more, Chiquis launched her own career as a singer in 2014, and plans to release her debut album, a bilingual mix of banda and pop, in May.

Preceding the album will be Chiquis's memoir, *Forgiveness*, due out April 7 from Atria Books, in which she breaks her silence about her painful life experiences, including the events that led to the now-famous rift between her and her mother two months before Rivera's plane crashed in Mexico on December 9, 2012, a time Chiquis calls "the worst two months of my life."

Wrapped in a fleece blanket adorned with printed photos of Jenni, Chiquis is ready to set the record straight on some of the more flagrant misconceptions that have been circulating on social media.

MISCONCEPTION NO. 1

CHIQUIS'S LOVE LIFE IS A HOT MESS.

The wildest speculation thus far has been that she had an affair with former baseball All-Star Esteban Loaiza while he was still married to Jenni. (They divorced in October 2012.) Chiquis vehemently denies the rumors, blaming them on outside "toxic voices" that were allowed into Jenni's circle of trust.

"I don't think that she believed it in her heart," Chiquis says, and while she didn't reveal the exact reason why she and her mother stopped speaking, she did offer this: "It wasn't just that rumor; it was so many things that I explain in the book that caused the separation to happen. I had a lot of say in her life and in her career, and it was kind of nice [for certain people] to see me out of the way."

Unfortunately, mother and daughter never got the chance to resolve their differences, but Chiquis says that she believes Jenni was at the point where she was ready to reconcile. "My mom was a very smart woman and I think it got to a point where it was such a big mess, it had gotten out of control, it had to do with one of her babies, her daughter who she loved so much, that she didn't know how to fix it. But I know she was ready to talk to me."

Further complicating matters was the confrontation between Jenni and Chiquis's on-again, off-again boyfriend, music executive Angel Del Villar, after the Premios de la Radio (regional Mexican music awards) in November 2012. Video captured him insulting Jenni in the parking lot. In a lengthy Twitter message following the incident, Jenni challenged Del Villar: "What kind of man are you?"

Chiquis and Del Villar are now back in a relationship and she considers him a changed man. He formally apologized to her siblings after Rivera's passing, she reveals. "I can honestly say at this point he's a different person. I've seen him evolve and that makes me feel good," says Chiquis. "If my family accepts him, it's for a reason."

Though the two have discussed marriage and Chiquis admits to being in love with him, she seems to be in no rush to the altar. "Even if it's not long-term, I'm very grateful for the experience," she says. "I really do feel that I'm protected by God, and now my mom and my guardian angels, and that it's gonna be okay at the end of the day."

MAKEUP BY ROKAEL. HAIR BY PAUL NORTON FOR TRACEY MATTINGLY. MANICURE BY KAREN GUTIERREZ FOR NAILING HOLLYWOOD. STYLING BY ANGEL TERRAZAS.



Blazer and dress, Aidan Mattox, price upon request, aidanmattox.com



Blazer, **Adrianna Papell**, price upon request, adriannapapell.com. Pants, **Single by Galina Sobolev**, \$130 at singledress.com. Tank, stylist's own. Necklace, **Pushmataaha**, price upon request, pushmataaha.com. Sandals, **Marion Ayonote Couture**, price upon request, ayonote.com. Ring, **Lionette**, price upon request, lionetteny.com.

MISCONCEPTION NO. 2

CHIQUIS IS EXPLOITING HER MOTHER'S DEATH FOR PERSONAL GAIN.

While Jenni's absence may have forced Chiquis to think about her own life and career goals sooner than she'd planned, that doesn't diminish the loss, which she says was devastating: "I think all of 2013 there were a lot of days when I would just ask God to take me, 'cause I wanted to be with her."

Chiquis's life was closely intertwined with Jenni's. They were completely interdependent. "She once said that she didn't know what she would do without me," says Chiquis. "She compared it to a relationship where she was the husband making the money, and I was [the wife] at home, taking care of the day-to-day things." Jenni's success was a team effort, Chiquis says: "It was my accomplishment, too, when she got an award, when she was doing the sitcom, the boutique, her jeans, her book, her tequila—all these things we sat down and planned years before."

Planning the future was her favorite mom-daughter time. "She would say, 'One day I'm gonna be able to rest and really have a vacation and spend time with the kids and you're gonna be the one working.' Never in my life when she would say that and we would plan it did I think that she would be resting in paradise."

Her grief has gradually subsided. "Every year that goes by, I do feel stronger," says Chiquis, who is uplifted by fans' support on social media. And she believes Jenni would approve of her ambitions: "My mom used to tell me, you need to start doing your own thing, you need to not focus so much on me, I'm gonna be fine," Chiquis says.

MISCONCEPTION NO. 3

CHIQUIS IS WEAK.

Spend enough time on Chiquis's social media accounts, and it's clear that, even though she has legions of fans, there are also plenty of people intent on tearing her down, throwing shade every chance they get. But the idea that harsh criticism will break her appears misguided.

She has endured a lot. As a child, she was sexually molested by her own father, José Trinidad Marin; she courageously spoke out about the abuse and testified against him in court as an adult, reliving the nightmare all over again. Jenni divorced Marin in 1992; he was sentenced to 31 years in prison in 2007 and is still serving time.

By sharing her story in *Forgiveness*, Chiquis hopes to inspire others who have survived sexual abuse. "I have had to encounter so many obstacles, so much pain, so many lessons, but I think the difference between me and a lot of people is what my mom taught me—find something positive in

every negative situation, knowing that that situation is going on in your life for a better good, for a reason, for you to learn something and grow from that. So I'm very proud of myself—I'm still standing, I have my head held high."

MISCONCEPTION NO. 4

CHIQUIS IS COMPLETELY DELUSIONAL ABOUT HER TALENT.

Ask Jennifer Lopez—or any other superstar, for that matter—what the key to success is, and most will tell you, "Work hard, dream big." While Chiquis admits to not being the world's best singer, her dedication cannot be denied.

"People tend to forget that everyone starts somewhere; we're all evolving creatures," says Chiquis. "I don't think that I sing like Céline Dion, but I'm not a horrible singer. I'm learning and practicing. I'm not trying to be like anyone else, I just want to be a better me every single day."

Those who watched Jenni's top-rated reality show on mun2, *I Love Jenni*, or its spin-off, *Chiquis 'n Control*, know how Chiquis lights up on film, so it's no surprise that she plans to pursue acting. "My mom said there's something special there," she says, of her on-camera presence.

MISCONCEPTION NO. 5

CHIQUIS WILL NEVER MEASURE UP TO HER MOTHER.

No matter how much some people insist on pitting them against each other, Chiquis isn't competing with Jenni; she's becoming the woman her mother raised her to be: someone brave enough to use her voice as a platform, as Jenni once did. It's a responsibility that starts at home, rooted in the need to take care of her youngest siblings, Jenicka, 17, and Johnny, 13, who still live at home. (She has two other siblings, Michael, 23, and Jacquie, 25.)

"My brothers and sisters are the world to me. That's the best and the most valuable gift my mom ever gave to me," says Chiquis. "I need to be an example not only for them, but for all the young ladies and young men that look up to me."

The weight of carrying her mother's legacy while leaving her own mark isn't lost on her.

"Even though people may say, 'Oh, it's so easy for you because you are Jenni Rivera's daughter,' actually sometimes I think it's harder," says Chiquis, who shares Jenni's commitment to helping victims of domestic abuse via the Jenni Rivera Love Foundation and her own Boss Bee Nation.

"One thing that really did scare me was, what if I'm not doing things right?" she says. "Then I thought, what would my mom want? She would want me to follow my dreams."

We get the feeling Chiquis is not doing it alone.