


One and only Rowland has recently started eating in restaurants by herself. (She's a fan of Miami's Cuban food scene.) "I'm very social, but I think it's as important to spend time by yourself as it is to spend time with family and friends." Ring, Di Modolo. Solid bangle, M+J Savitt; all others, Catherine Weitzman

Singer and former Destiny's Child member Kelly Rowland discovers the freedoms (and fears) of finally being out on her own.

By Michele Shapiro Photographs by Riccardo Tinelli

going solo

A full-page photograph of Kelly Rowland sitting on a wooden boat deck, fishing. She is wearing a bright orange long-sleeved shirt, denim shorts, red rubber boots, and a light-colored straw hat. She is holding a fishing rod that is bent significantly, indicating she has caught a fish. The background shows a body of water and a residential shoreline with palm trees and houses under a clear blue sky.

Water baby

"I love to fish. My father introduced me to it when I was 4 or 5. I put worms on the hook. I didn't mind. I was really a tomboy when I was younger," Rowland says.

About five years ago, pop-music star Kelly Rowland made her first real estate investment, a five-bedroom home on the outskirts of Houston. She had no idea living alone would turn out to be such a drag. "The house was too big for me. It was a beautiful home, and I got a good deal on it, but it was just me living there, and it was huge," she says.

At first, the idea of establishing her independence after 13 years as one third of the mega-trio Destiny's Child seemed appealing. Not only did Rowland, Michelle Williams and Beyoncé Knowles perform together, but Rowland had been living with the Knowleses since she was 9 years old, having moved to Houston from Atlanta to eat, breathe and sleep Destiny's Child. She wanted to see what it was like to live on her own. "I'd been part of a group for nearly my entire life. I guess I wanted my own space," she recalls. But the fun of going it alone wore off quickly. "I didn't like being home by myself," she recalls. "I stayed in my bedroom most of the time. There were lots of windows, and as soon as it got dark, I'd put on all of the security alarms." Rowland invited Knowles, Williams and

other friends over to keep her company, but they complained that the house was in the boondocks. So after all those years of living out of a suitcase for concert tours, Rowland found herself doing it again—grabbing a duffel bag to spend the night at a bandmate’s place or with her parents. It wasn’t exactly how she’d envisioned her first experience owning a home. The house “didn’t feel lived-in,” she says. “Hell, I was never there!”

There was plenty to occupy her attention elsewhere. In the fall of 2002, she released her debut solo album, *Simply Deep*. The first single, “Dilemma,” swiftly climbed to the top of the charts. She found love, too, meeting and eventually becoming engaged to star Dallas Cowboys football player Roy Williams. And all the while, she was still performing with the wildly successful Destiny’s Child.

Then, in January 2005, only months before the wedding, Rowland decided to call it off. (Looking back, she says, “I think

I rushed into getting engaged before we really had a chance to get to know each other.”) That summer, Destiny’s Child began its farewell tour, after which Rowland planned to head back into the studio to record her second album, *Ms. Kelly*. In the midst of all these transitions, Rowland began to feel she needed a change of scenery, as well. She traded in her Houston house for a smaller, more intimate home in Miami, where she knew very few people. “I felt it would be a good place for me to spend some time by myself,” she says.

Once again, Rowland was living alone. At first, she had a difficult time making the switch from being a voice in the crowd to taking the lead. “It’s definitely easier to make decisions as a group, because sometimes three heads are better than one,” Rowland says. Although Rowland says Knowles and Williams are still her closest confidantes, she began to actually enjoy her quiet nights at home and the distance from her friends; they afforded her the opportunity to figure out what she wanted when the choices were purely her own.

After a year and a half in Miami, Rowland, now 26, can easily pinpoint the personal changes she’s made. “I’m more comfortable being by myself,” she says. “Even just going to lunch—a few years ago I never would have done that. I remember watching people eating by themselves, and I wanted to go sit with them! Now I’m one of those people.” Solitude and introspection have also helped her discover things as seemingly obvious as her own likes and dislikes. “When someone asks you, ‘What’s your favorite dish?’ it’s important to know. Now I’ve discovered that I love sushi. I think it’s important to know that stuff about yourself. Growth and change happen for a reason.”

Each day, Rowland sets aside 15 minutes to an hour to read the newspaper on her balcony or meditate and pray by the water’s edge. “I like to sit by the ocean and think about my goals,” Rowland says. “That keeps me balanced.”

In fact, the desire to be close to the water was a major factor in her decision to move to Miami, because she finds it both calming and invigorating. “The last time I was on the beach, I just closed my eyes. The breeze from the ocean was dancing and playing with my thoughts, and it made me extremely happy. I felt so comfortable in that moment,” she says. That newfound serenity has carried over to the recording of her new CD. “I went into this album thinking about having fun. When you start to think about the pressure, it takes all of the joy out of it,” she says. Rowland had a hand in nearly every aspect of the album, from the mundane (working out budgets) to the creative (cowriting many of the songs, choosing art for the CD’s cover). “Every day I trust my instincts more.”

Rowland believes her solo time has made her more interesting company. “You have so many thoughts when you’re by yourself; you have so many questions to ask. Then you have more to talk about!” She is open to dating again and says she was set up on a blind date recently. “It didn’t work out, but I’m hopeful that my next relationship will lead to marriage,” she says. “I know what I want now. I can spend time by myself. Meeting somebody is a bonus.” ■

Miles to go
“I’ve always admired Serena Williams’s legs, and now I’m trying to get them,” Rowland says. She works out four times a week with a trainer and runs on the beach on her own.





Hot salsa

Rowland has embraced Miami's Latin culture. "I love the energy, the food, the sassiness and sexiness. Man or woman, everybody's sexy." Dress, Gucci

Styling, Lida Moore Musso; hair, Neal Farinah for Balan Agency; makeup, Davide Calcinai for Stila Cosmetics; prop styling, Eddie Walker. See Get-It Guide.