

Hard Out Here

By Lily Allen

Perhaps best known for her satirical and sometimes controversial lyrics, Lily Allen is a 30-year-old singer-songwriter born in England. Following her parents divorce at the age of three, Allen wound up moving to many addresses around London. She worked her way through thirteen schools, being expelled from multiple for drinking and smoking, before leaving school at age fifteen. Through her boisterous demeanor and skills with song-writing, Allen was able to land herself a deal with Regal Records, but felt frustrated at the slow pace and began posting her music online (Biography, n.d.). Allen was one of the first artists to establish themselves through social media, garnering herself a large follow via MySpace before her debut album, *Alright, Still*, was released (Lily Allen, n.d.).

The song "Hard Out Here," from her latest album, *Sheezus*, is an attack on the double standard in North American society, especially in the music industry, as well as the objectification of women in media. She refers to the manner in which women are demeaned for having sexual relationships, a treatment men rarely, if ever, receive. Allen mentions the "glass ceiling," a term used to describe the manner in which women are often kept from climbing to the same level of success as men. Her second verse is filled with remarks about beauty relating to weight and physical appearance, and the need to compensate if a woman doesn't meet these standards, ending with the line "And if you can't detect the sarcasm, you've misunderstood." She uses the slur, "b!tch," when referring to herself, and while it may seem counterproductive, the use of the term is

meant to be ironic as it is often directed at women who are assertive or speaking their mind truthfully.

It is evident that this song is meant to be satirical, while still provoking thought from its listeners. I chose the song because I agree with the majority of the message being sent out, and I feel like a lot of females in our society can relate with the lyrics in one way or another. The song is unashamed in its calling out of the hypocrisy of media that criticizes female celebrities for dressing 'provocatively,' or having multiple partners, while ignoring, or even praising, men for doing the same things. Even in a smaller community, such as the high school, I see instances of the same kind of behaviour; however, these acts of discrepancy do not always come from students. The dress code previously implemented at the school seemed to criticize and penalize female students more heavily than males, although it has since been uplifted, or loosened considerably.

Another important message being sent is that women should not have to fit a certain image, or be considered valuable by men's standards. One of the reasons I like this song is because it doesn't just call out the idea that women need to look a certain way, but that they're often expected to compensate for not meeting the physical standard set for them. Many girls are presented with the idea that their main goal in life is to be attractive and find a partner, and Allen points out that if a girl is deemed 'pretty enough' by society, she "better be rich, or be real good at cooking." Being a young female, I have often felt the pressure to measure up to the invisible, yet overwhelming, standard faced by many women. I think it's very important to have women know that they don't need to act a certain way in order to have value, because there is no way to measure the value of a

person, and that they should focus on being happy and healthy before worrying about being attractive.

A criticism I have for the song is the line "don't need to shake my @\$@ for you, 'cause I've got a brain." For a song that is supposedly about empowering women and not being subjected to the double standard, this lyric gives off the distinct impression of slut-shaming. I have considered the possibility that the lyrics are meant to be interpreted as Allen saying she does not need to dance a certain way to garner attention like the majority of media would have you believe she needs to, as a female artist; however, it still seems to be an attack on women who do dance that way, and I disagree with that point whole-heartedly. While women should not be required to act a certain way to be successful, they should also be able to without being demonized or looked down on.

Overall, I greatly enjoy the bold message being sent by Allen, and agree with the majority of the lyrics she has presented in "Hard Out Here." Her use of provocative language may turn some people away from the song, but I believe its use places emphasis on the point she is trying to make. The song is amusing and catchy, while still leaving the listener with a message to consider. While there are certainly many other songs that promote the same idea, and perhaps do so in a more polite manner, I chose this song because of its bold and unapologetic manner. I believe it's very important for people to speak out against inequality, and to do so without having to walk on eggshells.

References

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