



Sixth Form Mercury

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The music industry, patriarchy and twerking

By Luke Kosky

Lily Allen, in a video parodying the music industry, has created a shock wave of disbelief and has attracted a huge amount of controversy in a very short amount of time.

In Allen's video she parodies the music industry by having scantily dressed women 'twerk', and she jokes at the provocative things that women do, and in some cases, are made to do, in music videos. Throughout her video, there are women who are twerking and an old white businessman directs the women on the provocative acts he wants them to perform.

What these problems in the music industry are and why Allen's video is so controversial are key questions that this article will attempt to begin to discuss.

Sexism in the music industry is blatant. When a rapper raps about his 'chicks' or objectifies women by using provocative images of them having champagne poured all over them, then that rapper, if he is a man, is hailed as a 'lad'. Meanwhile if a female rap artist mentions how much sex they have had then they are often shamed by the public and especially by the media - in comparison to the men, who are hailed as heroes.

If you look through most videos you'll find at least one woman stripped down to very little but her underwear, while her male counterpart will be left fully dressed. The music industry promotes overt sexism and encourages young girls to aspire to present themselves and their bodies in certain ways, to seek validation from males.

But despite the overt sexism that exists, very few artists or consumers are willing to stand up against it, leaving multiple reasons for the sexism existing in the industry.

First, there is very little push for change from the top of the music industry. Currently the heads of massive record labels know

that scantily dressed women sell records and so they have no incentive to change the current system.

This is furthered by women who are hugely successful and at the top of the music industry. Chances are that these women are the ones who have conformed and accepted the patriarchy and misogyny.



Beyoncé, arguably one of the most successful female singers of our time, went on tour as "Mrs. Carter", for example. Rather than to go on tour as an independent woman, she went as the wife of her husband.

Finally, the public is often unwilling to stand up against the sexism in the industry. This is partially due to a lack of knowledge on the part of the public: many people don't seem to understand that 'blurred lines' are propagating a violently misogynist culture (the blurred lines of consent) - but as long as the song is catchy, people don't seem to care about the objectification of women that it promotes.

Despite this blatant sexism a song that attempts to attack it, such as Lily Allen's parody in 'It's hard out there', finds itself attacked by feminists.

Lily Allen's new video has been railed against partly due to her method and partly due to her overall message. On the one hand, it is unclear as to whether Allen is only scorning the rich white men who own

the music industry for being a key cause of the sexualisation of women, or whether she is also scorning women like Miley Cyrus who have sexualised themselves in order to become successful.

Is Lily attacking the idea of women choosing to twerk in order to be successful? Or is she attacking the idea of women being forced by men to twerk, as it is a successful way to sell music?

Furthermore, a parody is not the best way to tackle such a serious issue, and a large amount of the satire is lost in translation when Allen is the only fully clothed woman among a set of semi-naked, black women twerking. One criticism that a large number of people and articles have arrived at, is the idea that Allen isn't representing all women in her video.

That her message is flawed since she doesn't represent all women and certainly not all feminists doesn't matter though. Allen shouldn't have to represent all women. She shouldn't have to represent all feminists either. All Lily Allen is doing is representing her own views and how she perceives the music industry and its sexism.

It is not up to Lily Allen to represent the whole of the feminist movement in a music video; instead it is up to her to portray her own voice and her own views - and she succeeds sublimely at this.

Lily Allen has managed to momentarily shake up the industry, creating masses of articles on the problem of sexism in the music industry. Even if people disagree with her message or the way in which her message has been delivered, it is undeniable that she has kick started a much needed debate and discussion in the music industry.



Hi all,

With the recent drop in temperature and the release of THAT John Lewis Advert, you'd be forgiven for thinking that Christmas has arrived.

Unfortunately, it is still a whole six weeks away, but fear not: the Mercury is just what's needed to make those cold, dark nights whoosh past.

So sit down next to your crackling wood fire and enjoy!

Nick and Jack

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Swim Deep review

By Lewis Harrington

Swim Deep played their biggest London headline show to date last month, but they took it entirely in their stride.

Front-man Austin Williams strode onto the stage with rainbow guitars and hair like a Norse god, full of confidence as he surveyed the crowd.

The band was late on after Wolf Alice's storming support set, mindful of a wiped audience who recovered at least some excitement in the extra break. Abusive chants and excitable murmurs were quashed by the open-

ing chords of album track 'Francisco' and by early single 'Honey', the crowd was singing back every word.

It's a testament to the strength of their debut album, *Where The Heaven Are We*, that despite average reviews, Shepherd's Bush soared with every track.

By their mid-set cover of Cyndi Lauper's classic 'Girls Just Wanna Have Fun', the crowd radiated enthusiasm for the four members (and one live keyboardist) dominating the stage with a confidence rare for such a new band.

Swim Deep brought on Wolf Alice to play a new song, 'Tassel Man', co-written by Austin and Wolf Alice's front-woman Ellie Rowsell - then concluded with their best and biggest song, 'King City'.

As confetti cannons exploded across the room and everyone but the drummer dived into the leaping and screaming crowd, here was proof that this Birmingham band is here to stay.



Knocking out ignorance

A looming, lean Muay Thai master faces off against a small girl specialising in traditional Karate.

The location? A small desolate street in China. It seems the king of Muay Thai has the fight in the bag: he throws fireballs relentlessly, creating an impassable obstacle course. But the girl is patient. She waits. She creeps forward. And when the time is right, she strikes – a kick to the face, a straight to the gut, and an upper to the chin sends the man flying into the air and crumbling before her feet.

“K.O.!” The announcer shouts, and the karate kyoshi bows as a sign of respect to her fallen opponent.

This captivating battle was fought earlier this year, and, despite the abandoned street they fought in, hundreds of thousands of people cheered and applauded from behind the monitor, all around the world. To the untrained eye, this is merely a game – *Street Fighter* – where people who smash buttons, and use the best moves and the best characters, always win.

To a loyal disciple, it is much more. *Street Fighter* is a game that unifies understanding and skill, to analyse, overwhelm, and knock out an infinitely changing opponent.

Where does this skill lie? Cynics of video games would say that *Street Fighter*, like all games, involves simply pressing buttons to do things. Anyone can do it! There’s no physical conditioning, unlike the Olympics.

Singaporean player Xian, the hum-



ble champion of the largest fighting game tournament in the world this year, did not have to run thousands of miles to perfect the performance of his character, the old switch-hitter Gen. Where’s the skill, then, in something as simple as pressing buttons?

‘Every button you press is a single move, a dedicated choice: one which you cannot take back, for better or for worse’

To an extent, they’re right. *Street Fighter* is simply about pressing buttons. But more specifically, it is about pressing buttons at the right time - and this minuscule subtlety provides an incredible dimension to *Street Fighter* that anybody can get into, but few can truly master.

You know that your opponent has an answer to your every possible attack or strategy. At the same time, you have an answer to every move that your opponent can make. The result is a chess match: a game of reaction and prediction in which opponents attempt to out-manoeuvre each other.

Every button you press is a single

By Samir Dewan

move, a dedicated choice: one which you cannot take back, for better or for worse.

In a chess match, you can sit back and analyse, consider every possible move with your sixty minute timer. In *Street Fighter*, you have ninety seconds. You can have your turn whenever you like - but so can your challenger.

Every button you press must be a careful analysis of your opponent - yet quick and efficient.

Xian did not have to run or squat or kick a ball to refine his skill. He had to refine the ability to read the opponent. He had to perfect every move he could make to make the most of his challenger’s mistakes. He had to analyse not just the enemy, but also himself, identifying his own patterns and eradicating them, so as not to become predictable.

Such conditioning is not as obvious as that required to be a sprinter or a footballer. But *Street Fighter* is a game of nuance: one misread, one mistake, and you’ve lost. Every subtle movement counts, as both Xian and the player of the karate specialist know.

Street Fighter is a game of pressing buttons. But it’s the thought, the precision, the knowledge that goes into every button press that makes it an exciting, shocking and awesome experience.

Sideline Scoop: Little Masters

By Harry Curtis



With the qualifiers for next year's World Cup in Brazil coming to a conclusion, rugby union's autumn internationals in full swing and Novak Djokovic storming to victory in the curtain call to tennis's ATP world tour, there was no shortage of things to write about this month.

It seems rude, however, not to pay tribute to a sporting icon who this month graced the sport he has come to out-shine for the last time before ascending to the pantheon of sporting legends.

That icon is, of course, Sachin Tendulkar. The preeminent achievement of Tendulkar's incredible 24-year career was becoming the first cricketer to reach the milestone of 100 international centuries, an achievement that resounds still more impressively when you consider the gulf between it and Ricky Ponting's 71 test centuries in second place.

The Little Master's career in numbers is extraordinary - but what elevates Tendulkar to the plane of the untouchables is his status within the nation that for over two decades has cheered each and every one of his century of centuries.

He has been described as India's best anti-depressant and every time he takes the walk to the middle, he holds in his grasp not only a bat but the power to lift the mood of the lion's share of a sub-continent.

The master batsman also achieved something not many of his standing have, in that controversy has never really fol-

lowed Sachin Tendulkar. He's a family man, modest in relation to his ability, and has generally been a model of sporting conduct.

In retirement he takes his place beside the likes of Pelé, Michael Jordan, Muhammad Ali and Babe Ruth as a hero who mastered his sport and as an icon who transcends the walls of sports stadia. In the words of Geoffrey Boycott: "he has no weaknesses".

'every time he takes the walk to the middle, he holds in his grasp not only a bat but the power to lift the mood of the lion's share of a sub-continent'

For every sporting Hercules, however, there are those sportsmen who we – from time to time – lavish far more praise on than we ought to.

With the onset of winter come the inevitable discussions about whether another Little Master, Lionel Messi, will add a fifth consecutive Ballon d'Or (football's premier individual gong) to his this collection or whether Cristiano Ronaldo might end the Argentinian's dominance of the accolade.

While Ronaldo has eclipsed everything Messi has done on the pitch this year, especially towards the back end of the calendar, football fans the world over will no doubt harbour fears that come 13 January 2014, there will be a grinning Argentinian at the front of the Zürich Kongresshaus.

Why this matters is a matter of integrity, something that the Ballon d'Or will no doubt forego if Messi extends his already unprecedented domination.

Many people point to Messi's domination of the accolade as exhibit A of his status as the best ever, but paradoxically his illustrious legacy may rely on being vanquished just this once by his eternal rival.

Let us recognise true sporting excellence when it presents itself to us and not ignore it on the grounds of favouritism. Come his retirement, Messi will no doubt ascend to the same plane as Sachin Tendulkar. For now, though, let's remember that he remains human.