

NEW YORK POST

ENTERTAINMENT



Lily Allen takes no prisoners in 'Sheezus'



Lily Allen has earned a reputation as music's wittiest big mouth. Her new album finds the singer as outspoken as ever.

Photo: Jamie Nelson

You've heard of Yeezus — now make way for “Sheezus.”

After five years of silence, British singer Lily Allen has finally returned with her third album, and — with tongue firmly in cheek — she has christened it with a nod to Kanye West's polarizing 2013 album.

“I wasn't intending to make fun of him,” Allen tells *The Post*. “The title was a joke. I love Kanye and I'm inspired by his music but also that he doesn't censor himself. He doesn't care about what people think, and that's something I aspire to.”

Allen gave Yeezy an early heads-up about the title but is coy about his reaction. “I got a response . . . but it's not something I feel I need to share!”



Photo: Warner Brother Records

She may have a long way to go before she gets to Kanye's level of combativeness, but Allen has never been one to back down from an argument. Since arriving on the scene in 2006 with her debut “*Alright, Still*,” the Londoner has been embroiled in spats and Twitter tussles with fellow British pop star Cheryl Cole (who once branded Allen a “chick with a d - - k”), Katy Perry (who said she was a skinnier version of Allen) and rapper Azealia Banks (who made nasty comments about Allen's children and husband).

Although some public figures take the vow of silence when provoked, Allen has no qualms dishing it out: her tongue is sharp throughout the glossy pop of “Sheezus.” On one track, “Insincerely Yours,” she takes a swipe at the celebrity scene, name-checking singer Rita Ora and model Cara Delevingne, before saying, “I can’t pretend/I’m not your friend.” Last week, she expressed regret over the personal references in the song and said (slightly unconvincingly, it must be noted) that she meant it more as a comment on the media’s portrayal of them.

“I’m not really a careerist, so I don’t think about repercussions as much as my peers,” continues the 28-year-old. “Everyone is opinionated, but not everyone else says things out loud like I do. It leaves me open [to criticism] a bit.”

Lead single “Hard Out Here” turned out to be a boon for those critics. The song emerged late last year with a video that made pointed condemnation of the music industry’s sexist objectification of women and heavily referenced Robin Thicke’s “Blurred Lines” video. But the stunt backfired when Allen was castigated for using black dancers as props. In a blog post titled “Lily Allen’s

Anti-Black Feminism,” a writer for vice.com claimed Allen was not satirizing the lurid aspects of the music industry, but “resentfully bemoaning not getting to enjoy the same success.”

“I was OK with the constructive criticism and the people who were genuinely offended,” says Allen. “But there was a strain of cool, male bloggers who thought it was OK to dismiss me in a misogynistic way.” Undeterred, Allen wrote the album track “URL Badman” about that online treatment. The song mocks the mindset of an Internet troll and ends with the lines, “I don’t like girls much, they’re kinda silly/Unless of course they wanna play with my willy.”

But “Sheezus” is more than just about settling scores, sounding off and ridiculing penises. In 2009, shortly after releasing her second album, “It’s Not Me, It’s You,” Allen announced her retirement from music and planned to start a family with her husband, decorator Sam Cooper. Tragically, she suffered a stillbirth in 2010 and nearly died of sepsis immediately afterwards. Those experiences would later inspire her to write again. “Initially, I wasn’t even intent on doing an album — I just needed an outlet, especially after the death of my baby,” concludes Allen, who is now the mother of two healthy

daughters, Ethel Mary and Marnie Rose. “The song ‘Take My Place’ on the album is about that. I find all writing is cathartic, and that’s why I went back to it.”

As a result of Allen’s return, pop music is a much more colorful place. Haters, retirement and even a near-death experience couldn’t stop her.

Sheezus walks again.

<http://nypost.com/2014/05/03/lily-allen-takes-no-prisoners-in-sheezus/>