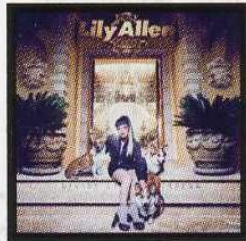


NOTABLE *Releases*



Lily Allen

Sheezus

(PARLOPHONE)

★★★★★ 6.5/10

Lily Allen's brazen attitude and candid persona have become constant fodder for headlines and with her latest arsenal of songs on her third album, *Sheezus*, you can expect the ink won't dry any time soon. Allen's first release in four years has already drummed up discussions over racism, feminism, and the pressures of fame, all of which she manages to rattle off over 12 tracks of readymade earworms.

Allen comes out swinging on the opening title track, calling out a lengthy list of female pop stars in one swift verse, undoubtedly meant to jolt a reaction. Beyonce and Lorde are among the name-checked, but "Sheezus," much like the rest of the album, pre-empts its own misunderstanding. This isn't a public takedown, but a forward assertion of the age-old symbolism where female artists are pitted against each other in an arbitrary ring predetermined by one's gender. If you had any curiosity about Allen's position on feminism, this opening salvo should answer your questions.

That said, while *Sheezus* exudes ambition, it only proves successful at times and is merely stilted at others. Allen has openly admitted that her singles thus far, the more immediately gratifying “Air Balloon” and “Our Time,” are weak links forced by her label and that they detract from the album’s stronger moments. She’s right. Tracks like “URL Badman” and “Silver Spoon” will most likely never hit the airwaves, but they achieve the most bite as Allen fires back at critics who have wrongfully portrayed her.

Ultimately, her messages sail on a shaky vessel. Allen exerts herself so much on lyrical ammunition that musicality becomes a simplistic backdrop to her boisterous statements. Songs recycle uniform beats with nods to hip-hop and electronic influences, but Allen falls short of a revitalizing comeback. Even so, her bold statements are truly worth deeper consideration.

(www.lilyallenmusic.com)

By Melody Lau