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LILY ALL

MISTAKENLY ACCUSED OF BEING RACIST, SEXIST, AND ANTI-FEMINIST, LILY ALLEN SEEMS TO FOREVER DWELL IN CONTROVERSY'S SHADOW. IT COULD BE AN INTENTIONAL STRATEGY ON THE PART OF THE ENGLISH SINGER. OR PERHAPS IT'S SIMPLY THE U.K. MEDIA'S INSATIABLE THIRST FOR HEADLINES; ALLEN, NOW 29 AND MARRIED WITH TWO YOUNG CHILDREN, CAN'T OTHERWISE GENERATE THE PROVOCATIVE, STEAMY CONTENT TABLOIDS CRAVE. TO SOME EXTENT, LILY IS PLAYING THE GAME. AFTER ALL, SHE DID NAME HER LATEST ALBUM *SHEEZUS*, AN UNSUBTLE NOD TO THAT OTHER HEADLINE GRABBER ACROSS THE POND. AND **SHE'S NOT PLAYING IT SAFE HERE, TALKING MOTHERHOOD, THE PRESSURE TO BE THE QUEEN OF POP, AND THE LACK OF SHOUT-OUTS TO MENSTRUAL CYCLES IN MUSIC.**

INTERVIEW BY DAVID DRAKE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SARAH MCCOLLGAN

Do you feel prepared for your first tour since having kids?
That's like asking, "Are you prepared for having children?" You'd like to think so, but in reality when it happens you don't know how it's going to pan out. I haven't done it yet, so I don't quite know. In an ideal world, I'd love for them to come on the tour bus with me and sleep there, but they're two kids, aged 2 and 1, and it'd be quite unfair to do that. Kids have got to be settled—otherwise they turn into wreck heads when they're grown up.

How has motherhood changed your songwriting?
On my previous records, there's always been anger and antagonism directed at specific people, mainly lovers. Now that I'm happily married and have some children, I find the antagonism is more directed on a social and political level rather than at individuals.

You call out Rihanna, Beyoncé, Katy Perry, Lady Gaga, and Lorde by name on "Sheezus," though.
Well, a lot of what I do is social commentary and commenting on social media and pop culture in general, and you can't do that without mentioning people at the forefront of that. You could, but what's the point when you can use their names? It hasn't been anything horrible about

any of them at all; it's actually supportive. Well, it depends which way you interpret it, but it was written in a positive way.

Society forces all female artists to compete. How do you feel that pressure?
If my record company found out that another female artist was going to drop her album on the same day, they'd be like, "Oh, no, no. There's a risk that you might come in second, in which case you'll be viewed as a loser." For women, there's a "queen" thing associated to music. You've got to be the best, you've got to be the prettiest, you've got to be the most successful—otherwise you're nothing. Men don't get that. They just don't. I don't see it, anyway.



(STYLING) CLEVE WINES (HAIR) WENDY GLENNER (MAKEUP) JORDY (MANICURIST) NAOMI WATUDA (SHIRT) JONATHAN SIMON (JEWELRY) EAR CLIFF BY PSYCHE (THIS PAGE) TOP BY JONATHAN SIMON / NECKLACE BY PLUMA (OPPOSITE PAGE) BODYSUIT AND PANTS BY FLEUR DU MAL / BRACELET BY PLUMA / EARRINGS BY LADY GREY / RING BY VITA FEDE

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"If being vocal and fearless is what makes Kanye Yeezus, then sure as hell I'd be Sheezus!"

Why did you decide to call your album *Sheezus*?

I totally do not put myself on a par with Kanye, musically, at all, but what I love about Kanye, aside from his music, is the fact that he is vocal about whatever he wants to be vocal about. He isn't scared about being reprimanded for his views, or he doesn't seem to care. Whether it's about leather jogging pants or whatever, he'll talk about it with conviction. I think that's what makes him Yeezus. I'm sure the reason he decided he was Yeezus is different from what I think makes him Yeezus, but if [being vocal and fearless] is what makes him Yeezus, then sure as hell I'd be Sheezus! [Laughs.]

What's your favorite song on the album?

"Sheezus." It's funny. It's provocative. It's the only song that I've heard that says the word "period" in it three times in the same sentence and I like that.

FOR MORE WITH LILY ALLEN GO TO COMPLEX.COM