

The Year of Beyoncé

Rachel Pratl, staff writer

Opinion – What do you think of when you hear the name “Beyoncé?” I bet you just think of the woman who sings all those catchy songs on the radio, the one with all that great hair and the signature dancing, lots of dancing. Maybe you’ve seen one of her music videos on the internet and privately joined her in the hip-shaking and shoulder-shimmying. Possibly you even think of her stunning vocals in Dream Girls or her fierce, yet relatable “that’s my man” claim on Idris Elba in Obsessed or Foxy Cleopatra’s psychedelic blonde afro in Austin Powers: Gold Member.

Yeah, it’s safe to say that she’s done a lot, but thinking of Beyoncé as only a singer and actress only scratches the surface of who she is.

When I think of Beyoncé Knowles, I think of how her career has impacted my life. I always think about how the first time I heard

the unhinged honesty in her voice in the acoustic YouTube version of her song “Halo,” my eyes welled with tears; it was the most beautiful song I’d ever heard, in fact, it still is. I think of her famous alter-ego Sasha Fierce, and that magnetic confidence that she unveiled in her 2003 hit, “Crazy in Love.” I admit to practicing that fearsome self-assuredness since I was old enough to be told to by the

world to simply “fake it ‘till you make it.” Fake it, I tried – as I attempted to master the “Single Ladies” dance routine, struggling to attain that non-plussed swagger that my body still can’t quite pull off. When I was 14, I remember the day I first saw her on that cover in the Harris Teeter checkout, the 2007 Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue. She was the first non-model and non-athlete woman to pose on the cover, and the second cover model of African American descent after Tyra Banks. It was the first time a girl who looked like me had ever been praised by the media. I remember feeling thrilled that she was around, even if just to make me dance and sing and feel like world might think I was pretty too.

Childhood memories aside, it seems as if 2013 will be the year of Beyoncé. We are only a few weeks in to this year I’ve heard nothing but breaking news; Queen Bey will be a busy woman this year. On January 21, 2013, she performed the national anthem from the steps of the Capitol during the swearing-in ceremony at President

Barack Obama’s second inauguration in Washington, D.C. On February 3, 2013, she headlined the Super Bowl XLVII halftime show, prompting many of my fellow non-football fans to, for once, experience the all-consuming rapture of the universally televised event.

This weekend, on February 16th, Knowles’ upcoming feature-length documentary film, *Life is But a Dream*, will premiere on HBO. Directed and produced herself, the film features footage from her childhood as a remarkable young talent, behind the scenes exposure of her rehearsing her stage performances and recording her music, and even some scenes showing the world-renowned icon as a regular woman, just like you and me, balancing her family life and her career, just trying to keep it all together. On top of

all of that, she just signed a \$50 million endorsement deal with Pepsi and soon she’ll set out again for another world tour to promote her fifth solo album, which is due for release as early as April.

So, it should come as no surprise that this February, she is also featured on the cover of *GQ* magazine as number one on their

“Hottest Women of the 21st Century.” Beyoncé is a brand, an image, and an unstoppable media machine; of course she would land the cover of one of the most popular magazines in the country. I know it’s been said that Beyoncé is just another female artist who, by complying with western gender stereotypes and directing her trademark racy performances, even by posing in little clothing on the cover of *GQ*, is simply profiting off of her sexuality.

I think that we, as women, owe it to ourselves, to look a little closer this time; to acknowledge Beyoncé as more than just another pretty face smiling at us from her perch next to the gum in the checkout aisle. We should do what we hope others would do unto us; look past the superficial and give credit for what she’s accomplished and what she stands for, which she reveals in her interview with *GQ*.

The article recalls a quote from her upcoming documentary where she says of the breakdown between herself and her father over the management of her company, “you know, equality is a myth, and for some reason,



Beyoncé at the Superbowl XLVII, image via HollywoodReporter.com

2013 Grammy Award Winners

collected by Brianna Karmi, staff writer

Fresh from Beyoncé killing it at the Super Bowl, the Grammy’s were presented this past Sunday. Keep reading for a full list of the winners of music’s biggest night.

Record of the Year: “Somebody That I Used to Know,” Gotye and Kimbra

Album of the Year: “Babel,” Mumford & Sons

Song of the Year: Jack Antonoff, Jeff Bhasker, Andrew Dost and Nate Ruess (“We Are Young,” Fun. and Janelle Monae)

Best New Artist: Fun.

Best Pop Solo Performance: “Set Fire to the Rain (live),” Adele

Best Pop Performance, Duo or Group: “Somebody That I Used to Know,” Gotye and Kimbra

Best Pop Instrumental Album: “Impressions,” Chris Botti

Best Pop Vocal Album: “Stronger,” Kelly Clarkson

Best Dance Recording: “Bangarang,” Skrillex and Sirah

Best Traditional Pop Vocal Album: “Kisses on the Bottom,” Paul McCartney

Best Rock Performance: “Lonely Boy,” the Black Keys

Best Hard Rock/Metal Performance: “Love Bites (So Do I),” Halestorm

Best Rock Song: Dan Auerbach, Brian Burton and Patrick Carney (“Lonely Boy,” the Black Keys)

Best Rock Album: “El Camino,” the Black Keys

Best Alternative Music Album: “Making Mirrors,” Gotye

Best R&B Performance: “Climax,” Usher

Best Traditional R&B Performance: “Love on Top,” Beyoncé

Best R&B Song: Miguel Pimentel (“Adorn,” Miguel)

Best R&B Album: “Black Radio,” Robert Glasper Experiment

Best Rap Performance: “____ in Paris,” Jay-Z and Kanye West

Best Rap/Sung Collaboration: “No Church in the Wild,” Jay-Z, Kanye West, Frank Ocean and The-Dream

Best Rap Song: Shawn Carter, Mike Dean, Chauncey Hollis, Kanye West and W.A. Donaldson (“____ in Paris,” Jay-Z and Kanye West)

Best Rap Album: “Take Care,” Drake

Best Urban Contemporary Album: “Channel Orange,” Frank Ocean

Best Country Solo Performance: “Blown Away,” Carrie Underwood

Best Country Performance, Duo or Group: “Pontoon,” Little Big Town

Best Country Song: Josh Kear and Chris Tompkins (“Blown Away,” Carrie Underwood)

Best Country Album: “Uncaged,” Zac Brown Band

everyone accepts the fact that women don’t make as much money as men do. I don’t understand that. Why do we have to take a backseat? I truly believe that women should be financially independent from their men. And let’s face it; money gives men the power to run the show. It gives men the power to define value. They define what’s sexy. And men define what’s feminine. It’s ridiculous.” To me, that quote embodies what Beyoncé is all about: female empowerment.

She is defining “what’s sexy” for a new generation of young women; to her, it’s a woman who designs and wears her own line of clothing, who keeps her personal life hidden from the media unlike so many other talented Hollywood starlets, who produces her fame according to her own design. Beyoncé is a brand, the next Oprah, appealing to a much larger audience of young men and women, proving that what started with singing and dancing has grown into a force to be reckoned with. That force is of a woman who is driven, hard-working, uber-talented, and independent, who is constantly

redefining what a ‘hot,’ in demand artist looks like; for now, it’s a newly married mother of a one-year-old! And on top of all of that, she looks normal, like a healthy, confident young woman, showing girls that you don’t have to fit into the preconceived ideal of a stick-thin, Caucasian, blue-eyed, blonde-haired beauty to be a success. Her music, her image and her bold statements about power, independence and femininity will help young women realize, perhaps for the first time, their right to define “sexy” for themselves.

Growing up with her music, her presence on the pop culture scene used to symbolize the coming of a new era within the media, the due appreciation of a multi-faceted star. Now, as a grown-up with a slightly broader world-view, she symbolizes not only that base appreciation, but now her unfathomable success, the kind of success I can only hope and dream for. To me, she is still that glowing inspiration, that glossy cover girl making me feel, all over again, that I, too, can run the world.