

Alice Short: never short for words

Especially when it comes to literature, hip hop, and feminism.

By Kirsty Sanders

Rapper and poet Alice Short has been blowing up Nottingham stages with her sharp wit, political edge, and deep-seated passion for voicing her opinion on current affairs with confidence, flare, and attitude. After being listed in Left Lion's '20 Top Nottingham Music Releases of 2017' and having two of her recent tracks played on BBC's 'Introducing' radio show, I was intrigued to catch up with Alice and discuss her opinions on literature, feminism and the recent Harvey Weinstein scandal, which she had lots to say about in her recent track 'Harvey Weinstein's a Prick'.

Do you have any literary inspirations?

I like JK Rowling, just because hers were the first books I ever read. I like Jack Kerouac too, because I'm a cliché and Kate Tempest wrote a book too, but I got into her because of poetry and hip hop and they kind of cross over into literature.

Who are your musical inspirations and why?

Kate Tempest, Patty Smith, Joy Division, Eminem and more recently Loyle Carner and Kendrick Lamar. I like them because they focus on the words more than the music. They have a message.

What do you think about the way poetry and rap overlap and the way poetry is becoming more accessible and inclusive through rap and hip hop?

I think that they have always overlapped, especially with the artists who do focus on words more. People kind of say *hip hop*



(Credit: Mikey Sanders)

has become poetry, or poetry has become hip hop, but I think they're both the same thing, it's just rap isn't written in a traditional form like a stanza, it's free flowing.

Did you start with poetry and then progress into rap or was hip hop always your focus?

That one's kind of weird because I did start with hip hop but because I didn't have access to beats at that time I would just write poetic verses. That's what I mean about how the two overlap because just by adding a beat I could then turn my poems into music.

How do you find being a female in a stereotypically male dominated genre of music?

It's fine, I mean I didn't go into it like *oh I'm a woman in this, so I've got to dress and act a certain way*, I just found people that I liked, and I wrote like they did.

Overthinking gender has never been a thing in my life, I think other women in hip hop like Iggy Azalea and Nicky Minaj focus on their femininity and being sexual, but I don't. The main problem that I find is women defining themselves as 'female rappers', by doing that you're already putting yourself on the back foot and I think that is where the problem lies. By adding 'female' you're already categorising yourself into a different genre than men, who are just 'rappers'.

Have you ever had any bad experiences as a result of being a woman in hip hop?

No not really but I think I have limited myself. I think women put their confidence across in a different way to men, men are more outwardly confident whilst women just go up and do what they're going to do without having their friends up there with them to hype them up. I mean I have seen other women get a bad reception for rapping, but I haven't. But I suppose I don't present myself as overly feminine, so I think people look at me and are more like *what the fuck is that?* They can't work it out, so they can't have a problem with it. You can't have a problem with what you don't understand.

Can you tell me about your recent track 'Harvey Weinstein's a Prick' and what it is that inspired you to speak out about it?

Basically, Harvey Weinstein's a prick. I wrote the track a couple of weeks after it all kicked off and it's not about suffrage like *oh those poor women*, it's about him. I wanted to be like, *you're a prick because you did that, you chose to do that, and you haven't taken anything away from those women, regardless of what you did they're still strong women*. I think that was the main thing with a lot of what came out in the press. Strong women were being ridiculed for what happened to them and I was like if celebrities can't have these things happen to them and be vocal about it how are normal people ever going to have the confidence to speak out about abuse? You've got to be vocal about these things, I didn't think *oh this is going to change the world* it was just something that I felt very strongly about.

What is your main aim with the music you produce?

To be the best ever in the whole world.
No, I just want to say stuff and make people think about things. I want to eventually collaborate with people and just make a living out of it.

You can catch Alice performing at 'Poetry is Dead Good #42 with Mark Grist' for the Nottingham Poetry Festival, Tuesday 24th April, 7pm, Fox & Grapes Brewery, £5.50/£4.40 for students.