Lady Gaga’s “Born This Way” Battles HIV

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By Trenton Straube (Copy Editor, POZ)

Lady Gaga’s latest hit single “Born This Way” must be the most overtly pro-gay song to perch atop the Billboard Hot 100, where it currently waves like a rainbow flag on a Pride float. (You can read the lyrics at the end of this post).

Though her message to love and express yourself has been labeled a “gay anthem” linked to LGBT causes--for example, to counter gay teen suicides--Gaga’s empowering dance track also does double duty as a battle cry against HIV/AIDS.

How? Simply put, LGBT people who love and respect themselves are less likely to put themselves at risk for HIV, compared with those who are struggling with their sexuality or who are rejected by their communities. This is because those who aren’t empowered and accepted are more susceptible to drug and alcohol abuse, to depression, low self-esteem, homelessness, unhealthy sexual relationships and myriad other factors that increase one’s risk for contracting the virus.

What’s more, the very title “Born This Way” is a powerful rebuke to the ex-gay movement. This fundamentalist religious ideology posits that LGBT people are not born this way, baby. Indeed, the ex-gay theory goes, same-sex attractions result from childhood trauma, sexual abuse or unhealthy relationships with parents. This, in turn, means that being gay can be overcome with reparative therapy and the power of God.

Gaga’s not having it. She opens “Born This Way” by stating: “It doesn’t matter if you love him, or capital H-I-M, just put your paws up, ’Cause you were born this way, baby.”

Amen. And by the way, this ex-gay ideology is not a fringe belief system to be snickered at by those of us lucky enough to live out, loud and proud lives. Its dangerous premise continues to devastate individuals, families and communities (Uganda, anyone?) while helping spread HIV in the process. For more details, click here to read POZ’s recent cover story linking the ex-gay movement with the spread of HIV.

Of course, Gaga isn’t the first artist on the planet to trumpet loving yourself and living a healthy life. Back in the day--1977 to be exact--openly gay singer Carl Bean had a hit disco anthem titled

“I Was Born This Way” (and Bean’s version itself was a remake of a 1975 track by Valentino; the chorus goes “I’m happy, I’m carefree and I’m gay / I was born this way”). Bean went on to found the Minority AIDS Project and is now the archbishop of the Unity Fellowship Church in Los Angeles.

But has any celebrity ever sang about HIV and queer equality backed by the star-wattage of Gaga? The week after launching her track, an alien-looking Gaga appeared on *Good Morning America* wearing what she described as a “latex and condom-inspired outfit.” But there’s a method to her madness. She was there to speak about the MAC AIDS Fund, for which she’s a spokesperson.

“It’s shame and stigma around [sex and taboo subjects] that make people not protect themselves [from HIV], that make you not treat yourself with respect,” Gaga said during the interview, adding that “’Born This Way’ is about self love, and MAC AIDS Fund is about self love.”

Keep in mind that this 24-year-old reaches a gazillion little monsters--the nickname for her fans--across the globe. “My fans think it’s cool to be aware of social justice and...things like HIV and AIDS and protecting yourself,” she told the GMA audience.

Unfortunately, positive messages and good intentions do not automatically a classic gay anthem make, nor do they put an artist above reproach. Indeed, “Born This Way” has reportedly birthed a bitchy backlash against Gaga by the gays--well, at least from a cynical segment of the gay population that’s of a certain age and zip code and that perhaps can’t relate to how empowering her lyrics can be, for example, to a 14-year-old in rural Alabama. But that’s a blog post for a different day.

For now, I am one little monster happy to put his paws up (and his “POZ up”!) in honor of Lady Gaga.

“Born This Way” Lyrics:

Intro:

It doesn’t matter if you love him, or capital H-I-M

Just put your paws up

’Cause you were born this way, baby

Verse:

My mama told me when I was young

We are all born superstars

She rolled my hair and put my lipstick on

In the glass of her boudoir

“There’s nothin wrong with lovin who you are”

She said, “’cause he made you perfect, babe”

"So hold your head up girl and you’ll go far,

Listen to me when I say"

Chorus:

I’m beautiful in my way

’Cause God makes no mistakes

I’m on the right track baby

I was born this way

Don’t hide yourself in regret

Just love yourself and you’re set

I’m on the right track baby

I was born this way

Post-chorus:

Ooo there ain’t no other way

Baby I was born this way

Baby I was born this way

Ooo there ain’t no other way

Baby, I was born this way

I’m on the right track baby

I was born this way

Don’t be a drag - just be a queen

Don’t be a drag - just be a queen

Don’t be a drag - just be a queen

Don’t be!

Verse:

Give yourself prudence

And love your friends

Subway kid, rejoice your truth

In the religion of the insecure

I must be myself, respect my youth

A different lover is not a sin

Believe capital H-I-M (hey hey hey)

I love my life I love this record and

Mi amore vole fe yah (love needs faith)

Repeat chorus + post-chorus

Bridge:

Don’t be a drag, just be a queen

Whether you’re broke or evergreen

You’re black, white, beige, chola descent

You’re lebanese, you’re orient

Whether life’s disabilities

Left you outcast, bullied, or teased

Rejoice and love yourself today

’Cause baby you were born this way

No matter gay, straight, or bi,

Lesbian, transgendered life

I’m on the right track baby

I was born to survive

No matter black, white or beige

Chola or orient made

I’m on the right track baby

I was born to be brave

Repeat chorus

Outro/refrain:

I was born this way hey!

I was born this way hey!

I’m on the right track baby

I was born this way hey!

I was born this way hey!

I was born this way hey!

I’m on the right track baby

I was born this way hey!

Click here for more lyrics.

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