

lou reed walk on the wild side

Introduction to "Walk on the Wild Side"

Lou Reed's "Walk on the Wild Side" is a seminal song that has left an indelible mark on the landscape of rock music. Released in 1972 as part of Reed's iconic album *Transformer*, the track is notable for its vivid storytelling and bold exploration of themes often considered taboo. The song not only showcases Reed's unique lyrical style but also reflects the cultural milieu of New York City in the early 1970s.

The Background of "Walk on the Wild Side"

"Walk on the Wild Side" was a product of its time, emerging from an era characterized by significant social changes and the emergence of various subcultures.

The Collaboration with David Bowie and Mick Ronson

The production of *Transformer* was significantly influenced by famed artist David Bowie and his collaborator Mick Ronson. Bowie and Ronson helped Reed hone his sound, blending his gritty, urban lyrics with glam rock aesthetics. This partnership brought a polished quality to Reed's raw artistic vision, making it more palatable to mainstream audiences.

Inspirations Behind the Song

Reed drew inspiration from the vibrant and often chaotic world of New York City, particularly the underground scene. The song features characters that embody the diversity of this urban landscape, including:

- Candy Darling - A transgender actress and a prominent figure in Andy Warhol's Factory.
- Holly Woodlawn - Another Warhol superstar, known for her film appearances and unique personality.
- Joe Dallesandro - A male model and actor, often associated with the Warhol scene.

Reed's lyrics paint a vivid picture of these individuals, celebrating their lives while also confronting the challenges they faced.

The Musical Composition

"Walk on the Wild Side" is distinctive not only for its lyrics but also for its musical arrangement.

The Structure of the Song

The song is characterized by its laid-back groove and chorus, which features backing vocals by a group of female singers, famously referred to as the "walk on the wild side" chorus. This contrast between Reed's deep, spoken-word style and the soaring harmonies creates a captivating dynamic.

Key elements of the musical composition include:

1. Bassline - The song opens with an unforgettable bassline that sets the tone for the entire piece.
2. Drums - The understated drumming complements the bass, allowing the lyrics to take center stage.
3. Guitar - The subtle guitar riffs add texture without overwhelming the vocals.

The combination of these elements contributes to the song's timeless quality.

The Lyrics and Their Significance

The lyrics of "Walk on the Wild Side" are one of its most compelling features. Reed's storytelling ability shines through as he describes the lives of various characters. The song begins with:

"Holly came from Miami, FLA..."

This opening line immediately immerses the listener in the narrative, introducing Holly Woodlawn and setting the stage for the stories of the other characters. The lyrics tackle several themes, including:

- Identity - The song challenges traditional notions of gender and sexuality, reflecting the fluidity of identity during the 1970s.
- Acceptance - Reed's portrayal of his characters emphasizes the importance of acceptance, both self-acceptance and acceptance by society.

The raw honesty of the lyrics resonated with many listeners, making the song an anthem for those who felt marginalized.

Cultural Impact and Legacy

"Walk on the Wild Side" was not only a commercial success; it also became a cultural touchstone that influenced countless artists and movements.