

= Can 't Hold Us Down =

" Can 't Hold Us Down " is a song recorded by American singer Christina Aguilera and rapper Lil ' Kim for the former 's fourth studio album Stripped ( 2002 ) . It was released by RCA Records on July 8 , 2003 , as the fourth single from the album . The track was written and produced by Scott Storch , with additional songwriting by Aguilera and Matt Morris . An R & B and hip hop song with dancehall elements , " Can 't Hold Us Down " criticizes gender @-@ related double standards .

" Can 't Hold Us Down " received mixed reviews from music critics . It was nominated for the Grammy Award for Best Pop Collaboration with Vocals at the 2004 ceremony , but lost to " Whenever I Say Your Name " by Sting and Mary J. Blige . The single peaked at number 12 on the U.S. Billboard Hot 100 and charted within the top ten of record charts of several countries including Australia , Denmark , Ireland , and the United Kingdom . The song was included on the setlists of Aguilera 's three major concert tours : Justified and Stripped Tour ( 2003 ) , The Stripped Tour ( 2003 ) and Back to Basics Tour ( 2006 ? 08 ) .

A music video for " Can 't Hold Us Down " was directed by David LaChapelle , inspired by the Lower East Side of New York City in the 1980s . The single has been widely recognized as a feminist anthem , and its music video has been noted for being an example of cultural appropriation for how Aguilera depicted herself as an African @-@ American woman .

= = Background and release = =

American singer Christina Aguilera rose to prominence with the successes of her first three studio albums Christina Aguilera ( 1999 ) , Mi Reflejo ( 2000 ) , and My Kind of Christmas ( 2000 ) . However , she was dissatisfied with being marketed as what her then @-@ manager Steve Kurtz desired rather than Aguilera 's own wish . In late 2000 , Aguilera hired Irving Azoff as her new manager and announced that her forthcoming album would have more musical and lyrical depth . She named the album Stripped , explaining that the term represented " a new beginning , a re @-@ introduction of [ herself ] as a new artist " . Hip hop producer Scott Storch wrote and produced several tracks for the album , including " Can 't Hold Us Down " . Additional writing credits for the song were provided by Aguilera and Matt Morris .

" Can 't Hold Us Down " was serviced to mainstream radio and rhythmic stations in the United States as the fourth single from Stripped by RCA Records on July 8 , 2003 . The song was distributed as a CD single from September to October 2003 in the United Kingdom , Germany , and Italy by RCA Records and Sony Music Entertainment . A 12 @-@ inch edition of the song was released in the United States on September 9 , 2003 .

= = Music and lyrics = =

" Can 't Hold Us Down " is written in the key of E ? major . Chuck Taylor from Billboard described it as a R & B track , while The New York Times 's Kelefa Sanneh characterized it as a hip hop song . Todd Burns writing for Stylus Magazine also noted elements of dancehall towards the end of the track . Aguilera and Kim 's vocals on the track , which Taylor described as " faux @-@ R & B " , span two octaves , from F3 to F5 .

" Can 't Hold Us Down " lyrically discusses feminism ; the song criticizes the " common " gender @-@ related double standards , in which men are applauded for their sexual behaviors , while women who behave in a similar fashion are disdained . In the book Therapeutic Uses of Rap and Hip @-@ Hop , Susan Hadley and George Yancy discuss that " Can 't Hold Us Down " is a hip hop song that " encourages young women to be proud , strong , and empowered to be all that they can be " . At the song 's first verse , Aguilera sings " Call me a bitch ' cause I speak what 's on my mind / Guess it 's easier for you to swallow if I sat and smiled " ; she later rejects that all women " should be seen , not heard " and encourages them to " shout louder " during the chorus . Aguilera comments on the double standard with the lyrics " The guy gets all the glory the more he can score / While the girl can do the same and yet you call her a whore " . Lil ' Kim shares a similar sentiment

during her verse in the bridge , questioning why a man is able to give a woman " some sex or sex her raw " while " if the girl do the same and then she 's a whore " .

Media outlets speculated that the lyrics of " Can 't Hold Us Down " were directed towards rapper Eminem , who referred to Aguilera in his songs " Off the Wall " and " The Real Slim Shady " . Spin magazine 's Josh Kun wrote that Aguilera suggested Eminem " Must talk so big / To make up for smaller things " . According to Kelefa Sanneh writing for The New York Times , Aguilera referred to Eminem in the lyrics " It 's sad you only get your fame through controversy " .

= = Reception = =

Chuck Taylor from Billboard criticized the song as a " real waste of time and talent " , while Rolling Stone 's Jancee Dunn called the track " curiously lifeless " . Stylus Magazine 's Todd Burns was critical of the song 's " bland " lyrics yet appreciated the dancehall elements that emerged at the end of the track . Josh Kun of Spin praised the lyrics for being more confrontational than the works of her contemporary Britney Spears . Jacqueline Hodges writing for BBC Music appreciated Lil 's Kim 's inclusion on the track for adding " a bit of edge " . " Can 't Hold Us Down " was nominated for Best Pop Collaboration with Vocals at the 2004 Grammy Awards , but lost to " Whenever I Say Your Name " by Sting and Mary J. Blige . On reviewing Aguilera 's greatest hits album , Keeps Gettin ' Better : A Decade of Hits in 2008 , Nick Levine from Digital Spy shared disappointment because the song could not make it to the compilation .

" Can 't Hold Us Down " peaked at number 12 on the US Billboard Hot 100 and number 3 on the Pop Songs chart . The song peaked at number 4 on the Canadian Singles Chart . In Australia , " Can 't Hold Us Down " reached a peak position of number 5 on the Australian Singles Chart , and was certified gold by the Australian Recording Industry Association for shipments of 35 @, @ 000 copies in the country . Additionally , it reached number 2 on the New Zealand Singles Chart . It peaked at number 4 on the Hungarian Singles Chart , number 5 on the Irish Singles Chart , and number 6 on the UK Singles Chart . The single charted at numbers 7 and 15 on the Belgian Flanders and Walloon Singles Charts , respectively . On the Danish Singles Chart , " Can 't Hold Us Down " peaked at number 8 , while its highest position on the German Media Control Charts was number 9 .

The song has been recognized as a feminist anthem . Nicholas Ransbottom from The Charleston Gazette placed the song on his list of the top ten songs of female empowerment in 2013 , calling it a " great anthem about women sticking up for themselves in a misogynistic world " . Several writers for The AV Club included the track on their list of seventeen " well @-@ intended yet misguided feminist anthems " in 2010 ; they agreed that the song itself was " actually one of her better songs " , although they felt that its accompanying music video overshadowed its lyrical " [ confrontation of ] the double standard of female sexuality " since Aguilera conducted herself in a provocative fashion that conflicted its intended meaning . Yasamin Saeidi from Burton Mail listed " Can 't Hold Us Down " on her list of the " top ten empowering lady anthems " in 2013 .

= = Music video = =

The music video for " Can 't Hold Us Down " was directed by David LaChapelle , who previously directed the music video for Stripped 's lead single " Dirty " in 2002 . It was filmed in a Los Angeles soundstage that depicted a 1980s Lower East Side neighborhood in Manhattan , New York City . LaChapelle described the concept of the video as his " ode to the ' 80s " . In the video , Aguilera wears a pink sleeveless shirt , a sleeveless sport jacket , a pair of shorts , a mauve baseball cap embroidered with the words " Lady C " , and white long socks . She is seen with dyed black hair and is wearing dark mascara and a gold nose ring . The residents of the neighborhood are mostly Latin and black people , resembling people living in a ghetto .

As the video begins , Aguilera is chatting with a group of women . When Aguilera leaves the conversation , a black man suddenly grabs her buttocks , making Aguilera stop and causing an argument between them . As she continues to sing , the nearby women in the neighborhood join her

, while the male residents join the man and form their respective sides in the street . They perform their own hip hop dance skills against each other . At the bridge , Lil ' Kim appears in a bikini and a sheer black blouse , and dances in her high heels . The argument ends with Aguilera spraying the men with a water hose , which she holds between her legs and parodies the male penis .

= = = Reception = = =

Jason Heller from The AV Club criticized LaChapelle for " [ swallowing ] the message " of the track by following an unrelated concept in the clip . In the book Music Video and the Politics of Representation , Diane Railton and Paul Watson felt that the video exemplified cultural appropriation , specifically noting how Aguilera conducted herself as an African @-@ American woman , and elaborated that it emphasized " a range of issues concerning the representation of gender and race " . Andy Cohn from The Fader provided a more favorable review , and opined that Aguilera 's " sass " helped to highlight her Irish and Ecuadorian background .

The music video for " Can 't Hold Us Down " has received scholarly attention as an example of cultural appropriation . Murali Balaji , author of the article " Vixen Resistin ' : Redefining black womanhood in hip @-@ hop music videos " published in the Journal of Black Studies , noted that " blackness and sexuality " has become characteristics by which African @-@ American women are able to self @-@ define . Consequently , he opined that the inclusion of Lil ' Kim in the clip represented an element of " ' primitive ' sexuality " , which Aguilera intended to imitate through her own behavior in the video . In their article " Naughty girls and red @-@ blooded women : Representations of female heterosexuality in music video " , published in Feminist Media Studies , Diane Railton and Paul Watson made specific note of the conflicting message raised by the lyrics " all my girls around the world " , while " blackness and whiteness are clearly inscribed on and through the bodies of Aguilera and Kim . " They suggested that this example detracted the message of the track by emphasizing the problem that " female heterosexuality " is confined to " the very limited range of ways " in mainstream culture , in this instance " gender and race [ and ] sexual behaviour " .

= = Live performances = =

Though the pair never performed the song together , Aguilera performed " Can 't Hold Us Down " on her Justified and Stripped Tour , which was held in support of Aguilera 's Stripped and Justin Timberlake 's album Justified ( 2002 ) . In late 2003 , the track was included on the setlist of The Stripped Tour , which acted as the Justified and Stripped Tour 's extension and happened without Timberlake 's acts . The performance in London was included on the singer 's first full @-@ length DVD Stripped Live in the U.K. ( 2004 ) . On her Back to Basics Tour ( 2006 ? 08 ) , Aguilera performed excerpts of " Can 't Hold Us Down " in a medley with " Still Dirty " .

= = Track listing = =

= = Credits = =

Credits adapted from " Can 't Hold Us Down " CD liner notes

Studios

Mixed at The Record Plant , Los Angeles , CA

Recorded at The Enterprise Studios , Burbank , CA , and Conway Studios , Hollywood

Personnel

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =