

= Lil Freak =

" Lil Freak " is a song by American recording artist Usher , taken from his sixth studio album , Raymond v. Raymond . Featuring guest vocals by Trinidadian recording artist Nicki Minaj , the song was written by her , Usher , Ester Dean , Blac Elvis and Polow da Don , the latter two producing the track . Its hook is based on a manipulated sample of American soul musician Stevie Wonder 's 1973 hit , " Living for the City " . " Lil Freak " was released as the second single from the album in the United States and Canada on March 2 , 2010 .

Carrying a dark tone , composed of heavy bass beats derived from R & B and hip hop music , the lyrics are about the thrill of orchestrating a ménage à trois in a club . The song received positive reviews from critics who complimented its sensual nature . It peaked at number 40 on the Billboard Hot 100 , and eight on the Hot R & B / Hip @-@ Hop Songs , becoming Usher 's 16th top ten hit on the latter chart . The song 's accompanying music video has a secret society concept , dealing with an underground club , playing on the storyline of the song .

= = Background = =

In an interview with MTV News when asked if he was just entertaining , Usher said the song was based on real life , stating , " Yeah , I mean , I wrote about it . It happens in this day and time . Those are the best chicks to be friends with , honestly . " Usher reiterated his statements in another interview with Access Hollywood , and when asked if he thought the racy lyrics would raise eyebrows , he said it would , commenting that that was an objective of the song . Usher also said that the work was like the dichotomy of Raymond v. Raymond , distinguishing one world from another , as in " playing the nice guy " or " showing the other side . " Before official release , the song was leaked onto the Internet in December 2009 .

= = Composition = =

The song is midtempo , with supported by heavy bass beats produced by Polow da Don , which Prefix Magazine called " Jurassic Park synths " . Chris Ryan of MTV News said " Usher pairs off with current queen MC Nicki Minaj , and the two glide over Polow Da Don 's minimal bass beat . " Sara D. Anderson of AOL Radio Blog said that the " heavy back @-@ beat tune confirms Usher 's old ways : " Yeah you the business / So What 's the business / Don 't be shy , I 'm just talkin ' to you girl . " Tom Breihan of Pitchfork Media called the heavily manipulated " Living for the City " sample , " a monstrous swirl of orchestral exoticism " . Minaj makes several puns in her lines , one of them referring to Santa Claus 's reindeer in a runthrough which Prefix Magazine reviewed negatively . She also refers to P. Diddy and Cassie in her lines , that she 's " plotting on how I can take Cassie away from Diddy " .

= = Critical reception = =

Critics positively received the song , complimenting Minaj 's cameo and the track 's production and lyrics . Andrew Winistorfer of Prefix Magazine thought that Usher should have gone with " Lil Freak " as the album 's first big single , saying , " It (OMG) doesn 't come close to matching the filthy heights of " Little Freak [sic] ... " He also said the song was " by a wide margin , the best track to be leaked from Usher 's long @-@ delayed Raymond vs. Raymond album " . In his initial reaction , he pointed out flaws of the song , but said that the song " could become unavoidable if it gets traction on radio " . Chris Ryan of MTV News called the song , " slick , sexy hip @-@ hop @-@ infused R & B done to its finest " . He also called the song " nothing short of freak nasty , " and " is so full of sexy sexuality that it 's enough to make Tiger Woods blush " . Vibe magazine commented that " wedding ring is definitely off on this Usher cut " , and that Nicki Minaj stole the scene in the song . Pitchfork Media commented favourably on the songs explicit nature , stating the song " isn 't some R. Kelly @-@ esque devotional hymn to sexual addiction " , and that " The whole towering mess makes a

drunken 3 a.m. threesome sound like the most epic endeavor anyone could hope for .. " The review also compared the song to Justin Timberlake 's " Cry Me a River " , stating , " it pushes into " Cry Me a River " territory for the same reason that " Cry Me a River " transcended : the gigantic , operatic backing track " .

= = Chart performance = =

On the week ending March 20 , 2010 , " Lil Freak " debuted at number 43 on the Billboard Hot 100 . It then fell to 66 , but rebounded ten spots to 56 , and later peaked at 40 on the chart . The song 's appearance on the Hot Digital Songs and Hot 100 Airplay charts at number 31 and 37 , respectively , helped stabilize its stay on the Hot 100 . " Lil Freak " charted at number 28 on the Hot R & B / Hip @-@ Hop Songs months before its release due to it being leaked on the Internet . It eventually peaked at eight , and was Usher 's third straight top ten hit on the chart , and 16th overall . According to Nielsen SoundScan , it has sold 508 @, @ 000 units in the US as of October 3 , 2010 . Internationally , " Lil Freak " reached 109 on the UK Singles Chart . Usher performed the song in the United Kingdom on The Graham Norton Show on June 7 , 2010 .

= = Music video = =

= = = Background and concept = = =

Usher and Minaj shot the music video on March 9 , 2010 in Los Angeles with director Taj Stansberry , represented by Leah Harmony and Ciarra Pardo . In an interview with Vibe , Stansberry commented on the video 's sex appeal and the pairing of Usher and Minaj , stating , " This probably has the potential to be [his sexiest video ever] . Usher ? s one of the best entertainers in the world , then you have Nicki Minaj who ? s fresh on the scene . Put them together and there ? s just sparks , it was real good . " When asked about the music video 's concept would redefine the word " freak " , commenting :

" My general idea was to take the word and show its many faceted sides , twisting and turning it to where there ? s really no distinguishing between one freak and another . Usher went there . When you ? re engaging in sexual activity , there are many transitions and this is not about what they look like literally , but what they look like metaphorically . It ? s about luring people into a situation . Because you have your thoughts on a ménage à trois , but then we ? re doing it in a non @-@ obvious way . "

On Minaj and her pairing with Usher , Stansberry said , " [Nicki] had a few looks that I really liked . She played the part , but still was her . If you really listen to her words in the song , you can kinda visualize her outfit . " Stansberry also confirmed that R & B singer Ciara and singer @-@ actor Jamie Foxx would make appearances in the video . In an interview with MTV News on the set of her video for " Massive Attack " , Minaj said that " The video is freaky . And it 's a great concept , a great story line , " Minaj told MTV News . " It felt just like one of the sequels to Saw . It was dope . " Stating that the video had a " secret society " concept , Usher told Access Hollywood that the place symbolized locations where people use to get away from pressures , and also said the movie Eyes Wide Shut was some sort of inspiration of the video . On March 22 , 2010 a thirty second preview of the music video was surfaced onto the internet . Two days later on March 24 , 2010 , Usher premiered the full music video on BET 's 106 & Park .

= = = Synopsis and reception = = =

The video begins with a woman walking in an underground tunnel , and she enters and elevator with Minaj , sporting a Cruella de Vil hairstyle , and other women . The elevator goes to what MTV News calls " Usher 's underground playground , " then soon finds Usher against a wall . A laptop is shown , and the video goes on to show people who are there , including Ciara playing a casino

game . Then , girls are performing choreography on poles , as Usher sings his verses on the wall in the tunnel . Nicki Minaj then comes to sing her verse and starts talking to the unknown woman who was in the tunnel with Usher , and then Minaj guides the woman somewhere . Foxx makes appears near the end of the video , with a red light on him . Usher sings the rest of the song on the wall in the tunnel with choreography from the women , until the video fades out .

BET Sound Off complimented the video and that it stuck to the storyline of the song , stating " there 's only but so much you can do with a video like this " without the video being banned , being labelled offensive , or " resemble a video we ? ve already seen . "

= = Credits and personnel = =

Songwriting - Usher Raymond , Nicki Minaj , Polow da Don , Blac Elvis , Ester Dean , Stevie Wonder

Production - Blac Elvis , Polow da Don

Recording - Jay Stevenson

Mixing - Jaycen Joshua , assisted by Giancarlo Lino

Contains a sample from " Living For The City " , written and performed by Stevie Wonder , courtesy of Motown Records .

Source

= = Charts = =

= = Release history = =