





sister savior

Peaches and Yoko Ono make revolution, not war

On Saturday, May 6, Yoko Ono and Peaches appeared at Daylight Studio in NYC for an *URB* photo shoot. The two met performing at All Tomorrow's Parties two years ago, but that was only the beginning. Currently, the Canadian-bred, Berlin-based Peaches is ready to rock and shock the world with her third album, *Impeach My Bush*. Yoko continues to turn heads as a lively conceptual artist on the edge. All things considered, a discourse between the two about gender roles and revolution was mandatory.

URB: We're here covering the phenomenon of Peaches breaking ground, while talking to one of the world's foremost revolutionary figures, Yoko Ono.

Yoko Ono: I think even the name Peaches is breaking the tradition. It's a real feminist statement.

P: To pick a more feminine name?

YO: Yes. Instead of saying, "I want to be like a guy." Maybe some girls might have thought that's the way to express feminism, which wasn't really true.

P: That's a big point with me. There's lots of things that — in feminist tradition — would say, "Stop that, stop this!" I'm like, "You can't stop it; it's already there, so build upon it, right over it."

YO: I don't want to brag about it, but I have to tell you. There was a big feminist meeting and they were all wearing jeans and jean jackets — the proper feminist uniform. They said, "Why don't you come meet with us? You can bring John Lennon, too." I wore a satin pink lumber jacket, very tight, big cut pants and stockings. You know, one of those very high-heeled pink platform sandal pumps.

John said, "Maybe you ought to go back home and get into jeans or something. You can't go like that." I said, "I'm going like this." So we knocked on the door. They opened and said, "Hello," like, "why's she like this?" There was a windowsill and I sat there, showing my legs. They all didn't like that, of course. I wanted to make a point. That's why, when you said Peaches . . . there was a peach color to [the stockings]. No one knew about this, because they were so ashamed that I dressed like that. So nobody spoke about it.

P: They didn't write about it? It was like, "Just leave her alone?"

YO: You know, I [learned] about the fact that I wasn't cool or something, and then John wrote back. I mean this was *The Village Voice*: "Why are you saying she's not cool? Was this some sort of choice awards?" I said I'm going to go as I am. So I loved it when you came out as Peaches.

■ INTERVIEW BY DENNIS SEBAYAN • PHOTOGRAPHY BY RUSS FLATT



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P: Little pink hot pants.

YO: Exactly.

P: That was a problem, too. Some feminists were like, "What are you doing? Why are you exposing, or even over-exposing yourself?" But it was also in the rock'n'roll tradition of breaking it all.

YO: You have to break the tradition. But it starts to set, you know? That's what you're tipping. I love it. That's one of the reasons — probably the only reason — I'm here now. She's an innovator. I was such a rebel, that I really got the message. I didn't know that you still had problems. Yeah, you would have problems. That was 1960 — obviously, I had problems with the feminists.

P: I just saw *Inside Deep Throat*, the Linda Lovelace documentary. Because she was so sexualized — it was the '70s with Gloria Steinem, and they hung around — she had to go to this other point. For someone like her, feminists really meant, "I have to be this way and close off my body."

YO: To despise women for flaunting their sex . . . it's crazy. What's wrong with it? If a guy flaunts it, that's OK?

P: I don't think guys flaunt their sex enough. They haven't been sexualized the way we have.

YO: No, because they feel that's a feminine thing.

P: Right, and that's part of my breaking through also. Because I'm working in the context of rock and hip-hop, that kind of music, I feel men need to be sexualized. I feel like men never had a sexual revolution.

YO: No, never. They didn't have to, because they were the master race.

P: I feel they need to.

YO: Master race — they didn't have to; we had to. There were many ways of doing this. I'm not just dating those people who created a serious attempt to revolutionize women's rights. That's good. But it doesn't have to be just that. In those days, they didn't even want to know about housewives. I belonged to the housewife syndrome, in a way: "Oh, Mrs. Lennon. What's she doing?" Now, we want to know about all women, and the profession of women.

P: I always get interviewed, and they say, "It's really hard for [men] now because women are so strong and [men] don't know their position."

YO: I sympathize with that. It must be very hard for them. But you see, we went through 2,000 years of struggle. It's good that they're getting into hard times — they will probably rise from it. We should be sympathetic, too. It's a difficult thing to be a guy now, if they thought about this seriously. Instead of saying, "OK, I'm going to be a macho guy and chauvinist pig and that's all right. Just get out of my way," it's not that. "Let's try to make something together." In that situation, it's good.

P: You have to be inclusive of men. When people think of feminism from the '70s, was it inclusive?

YO: Of course not.

P: But I mean now, you have to include. . .

YO: Men as well. In those days, we thought of them as oppressors. I didn't, but most of us did. It's a difficult game, especially for people who are considered oppressors.

P: Like people who fall from power? What do you do after that? Then you have to build up the pieces to make a balance?

YO: That was an illusory power.

Is there an underground, feminist revolution that is subversive to the mainstream and making a difference today?

YO: Well, she's the top act in that, you know? She's really coming on saying, "I can be a woman too, and make it happen."

P: I hoped it wasn't going to be subversive when I did it. But somehow, it seemed subversive and censored. I've also been not allowed. I'm not a male rapper, but I rap and make beats. But I will never be asked to be on TV, or Letterman's show.

YO: Why?

P: They give me all these excuses, like, "You don't have a band," "You're too dirty."

YO: [Laughs] *They think they're clean?*

P: But Snoop Dogg can go on. He doesn't have a band.

YO: They want to go places and look at things they think are dirty, but they want to do it behind the scenes.

P: It's funny, because there were a lot of women who were getting record deals. They would go into the record company and go, "This is what's going on now" and they'd play Peaches. A major label would never think about signing me. I was the artist edge.

YO: Right now, it's like that. It's not going to be like that in the future. They're going to appreciate you having been the innovator.

P: That's how I see it as a little subversive, just lyrically — I was starting to say things that rappers said. The only rapper who has been able to say that is Missy Elliott. But I'll switch it around like "shake your dicks" instead. Because I heard at least a hundred songs [about shaking booty] . . . I'm trying to be inclusive.

YO: I was always inclusive, because of John as well. I started to understand male problems through John. John would not let me just block that. He'd say, "Come on. This is what's happened." When he was doing this exchange of roles, he was saying, "Look, I feel very lonely, because there's not many male friends who

would understand me. There should be some men's club where I can go and talk about exchanging roles." And I felt so sorry for him, because he was feeling isolated. I think many men are feeling isolated, when they try to break that tradition, because that tradition is still there.

P: In so many ways.

YO: And backslapping, all that. But it's our fault, too. What you're doing, to make them understand that we're women as well, is great.

Yoko, were there times you were censored where you felt you had to face the fire the way Peaches has done?

YO: I was censored so many times. If I wasn't censored, I'd think "Oh, great" [laughter from both]. When you want to start to widen the awareness of the world and work for the better of the world, then you're doomed to have some people getting upset about it. You have to go ahead and be yourself. It's a very revolutionary thing to do. It's very dangerous to do, too.

P: It sounds like a really easy thing to do and it's the hardest thing. People are always like, "How do you have this confidence? How are you so outspoken? You're so overtly sexual," or whatever. And I'm like, "No, I'm just being honest and myself." People are bewildered by that. They're like, "But it's a character," and I'm like, "No."

YO: I pray that you just go over it without getting discouraged, because you're on the right track.

P: Well, people like you help us to get it there.

YO: In other words, innovators are steppingstones. And that's fine; that's how it should be.

What are we moving towards here?

YO: Revolution without bloodshed. We're going to have a beautiful world together. Together is the message.

Well, think about the harsh conditions that we face.

YO: Right now it looks bad. The battle at dawn is the worst. After that, it's going to be fine. I think we're being asked to really confront things.

P: I have this question. "Make Love Not War" — was that your line? Did that come from you?

YO: No, I think it was around.

P: I always feel like it came from you. On my new album, I wrote a song called "Fuck or Kill." It says: "I'd rather fuck who I want/than kill who I am told to."

YO: With people saying, "Cops are pigs! Kill the pigs!" I think, "No, let's kiss the pigs."

P: Make them blush . . . I had seen you perform last year, at All Tomorrow's Parties. I was excited to hear you sing.

YO: I forgot that you were there. Of course I remember meeting you.

P: I begged Vincent [Gallo] for three days, "Please, if there's one thing I get to do at this festival, can I watch Yoko from the front of the barrier?"

YO: So that's what happened.

P: Yeah. But also the performance!

You came out in an Abu Ghraib prisoner bag over your head. First of all, you knifed the screen. That's why people were like, [in a tremble-y voice:] "Screen, video, what are they doing?" Here you are, still being and it's not a museum piece. That's what I think is amazing about an innovator — you just keep doing it.

YO: I feel like we're on the same page, like she's my sister. It's great that she's doing it. When I'm asleep, she's doing it.

P: Peaches will take over today.

YO: Please take over.

P: I want to make you proud.

YO: Give me a big hug. I love you.

P: I love you, too. ←



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/Peaches