**Biography of Lana Del Rey**

*Elizabeth ‘Lizzy’ Grant* was born in 1985 New York. She attended a Catholic elementary school before moving to a boarding school in Connecticut at the age of 15, mostly to help with her alcohol dependency. It was here that a teacher exposed her to music and pop culture. After declining to attend State University of New York at Geneseo, she took a gap year and lived in Long Island working as a waitress. It was after this that she went to Fordham University and studied metaphysics.

At the age of 18 when she lived in New York, she began to sing in nightclubs, going by the name of *Sparkle Jump Rope Queen* or *Lizzy Grand and the Phenomena.* She always sung but never thought about pursuing it is an actual career until 2006, after a live performance at a live song writing competition. It was there she met Van Wilson who was a representative of 5 Points Records. He helped record a 3 track EP called *Kill Kill* still under her *Lizzy Grant* title in 2008.

Her EP was shelved however and she began to work community service for a number of years. She moved to England with one of her managers Ben Mawson, for a few years but returned to the US in 2011. It was this year that she uploaded a self-made music video to *Videogames,* on YouTube under the stage name *Lana Del Rey –* a name she made up that reminded her of the glamour of the seaside in Miami and Cuba.

The same month her video was uploaded, she saw an immediate response form fans and critics alike, winning a Q Award for Next Big Thing and an Ivor Novello for Best Contemporary Song. She later signed a joint contract deal with Interscope Records and Polydor. They bag to work on her second album titled *Born To Die*, which was released in 2012 and reached number 1 in 11 countries. Her album sold 3.4 million copies, becoming the 5th best selling album of the year.

Later that year she released what she called ‘more like an EP’ titled *Paradise.* Because of the small track listing of the album, only 8 tracks, it was also released along side a re-release of her *Born to Die* album featuring 3 new tracks titled *Born To Die The Paradise Edition.* In 2014, she released a short film titled *Tropico*, a thirty-minute short film about sin and redemption following Adam (played by Shaun Ross) and Eve (Played by Lana) as they are cast out of heaven, down to Los Angeles and eventually becoming born again Christians as the rapture occurs.

Her third album *Ultraviolence* was released in 2014 and gained some controversy for graphic language and imagery of sex and violence, something gained with all her albums also. But this didn’t sway critics who gave the album positive reviews and it still debuted at number 1 in the US. This was her second consecutive number 1 album in the UK.

**Analysis of Lana Del Rey**

Described by Douglas Wolk as a ‘self-stylized gangster Nancy Sinatra’ and ‘Lolita lost in the hood’ *Lana Del Rey* has been noted for her cinematic and pop culture sound, references and style. Her voice is described as an expansive contralto vocal range that spans 3 octaves. She has a unique ability to shift between a higher pitched, almost child like voice - heard notably in *Jealous Girl* and *Off to the Races-* to a more deeper and sultry voice - notable in *Gods & Monsters* and *Born To Die.* In a majority of hers songs she shifts between the two and sometimes incorporates elements of alternative rap like in *National Anthem, Diet Mountain Dew* and *Noir.*

There are several motifs and themes that feature throughout most of her songs. Besides the cinematic sound and production of her songs, one of the most common themes in her songs is America. Several songs *Come When You Call Me America, American* and *Chelsea Hotel* are directly named after some of the countries iconic culture. Other songs feature lyrics *'..I fell asleep in an American Flag', 'Diet Mountain Dew baby New York City...'* and *'Roses, Bel Air, take me there...'* that reference cities within the states and various pop cultural objects. Some songs are directly inspired by living there and her life at the same time - *Videogames, This Is What Makes Us Girls* and *Boarding School Days* - most notably.

Religion is also a common theme; *Lana* herself attended Catholic school and is a self-identified Roman Catholic. Although none of her songs are named after religious references, besides *Gods and Monsters,* there is imagery and lyrics that directly reference it - *'Mary prays the rosary for my broken mind’, 'Me and God, we don't get along so now I sing'* and *'You talk lots about God, Freedom comes from the call'*. Combining religious connotations with her dark twist on freedom, sex and pop culture allows from some interesting imagery and tones through her songs.

Sex and sensuality feature heavily throughout most of her songs. Where most of her songs feature references and allusions towards themes and pop culture, when it comes to sex and sensuality *Lana* is more direct and obvious, '*F\*\*\*\*d My Way Up to the Top'* and *'Cola aka P\*\*\*y'* are graphic examples. '*My p\*\*\*y tastes like Pepsi Cola', '...looking to get f\*\*\*\*d hard...'* and *'I know what the boys want, I'm not gonna play'* are examples of how she both directly references sensuality throughout her music.

One notable inspiration for both her music and persona is the novel '*Lolita'* which is notoriously known for its exploration of sexuality and innocence. References to the love-heart shaped glasses pop up in numerous songs- '*Off to the Races'* and '*Diet Mountain Dew' -* as does some of the books quotes - '*light of my life, fire of my loins'.*

All of these themes and motifs culminate and are expressed in the short film *Tropico.* The thirty-minute film, written by and starring *Lana Del Rey,* the film follows the biblical characters of Adam and Eve in a tale of sin and redemption. The film opens with a recite of poetry, flowing into the song *Body Electric*, where they both eat the forbidden fruit and are cast out of heaven to earth. On earth and during *Gods and Monsters*, they live carefree and wild lives in L.A; he follows a life of petty crime and she becomes a stripper. Finally during '*Bel Air'* they become born-again Christians and dance in a meadow as the rapture (depicted as an alien invasion) begins. The film combines, poetry, literature, religion, pop culture, sex, violence and redemption in the cinematic fashion attributed with *Lana Del Rey.*