



**Is the Fergie on this album different from the Fergie on the Black Eyed Peas albums?**

**Fergie:** It is different because I'm a singer first and foremost. There are more ballads and more intimacy between me and the listener because sometimes when you're in a group you don't have space to air out your dirty laundry. This [album] is a complete thought. It's not just a verse or a sentence. It's my complete feeling and emotion. I think people will be surprised because they don't know that sensitive side of me yet. I also like to experiment with different tones in my voice, and I wanted to make the album really colorful.

**Can you break down some of the tracks?**

**Fergie:** In "Fergalicious," I emulated ['80s female rap trio] J. Fad, and we sampled the track from Afro-Rican's "Give It All You Got." "Voodoo Doll" is my take on dub music. It's about my struggle with crystal meth. There's a demon part that's a completely different voice than the singing part, and it's almost like two voices. It's me battling with myself. "Mary Jane Shoes" featuring I3 is a breezy reggae song, and at the end I go

into a little bit of punk-rock mosh music because I love to do that if you've ever seen my stage shows.

"Finally" is the last song on the album. It's piano, strings and vocals, played by John Legend. He co-wrote that song. It's a timeless ballad that you can play 30 years from now, and it'll still be cool because it doesn't lend to any era. And it's really stripped down. I really had a chance to sing, although I didn't oversing anything. My taste is more to bring it out at certain moments.

**Will, you produced much of the album. What were some of your favorite moments on "The Dutchess"?**

**Will:** "Mary Jane." She goes from dub, doing her interpretation of roots, to some ska-punk and ends up with jazz. From a production standpoint that was fun, flipping all those different styles. Another song, "Big Girls Don't Cry," really pushed my production skills. I did an Edie Brickell type of production—"I'm not aware of too many things," on guitars. "Clumsy" is like the Shangri-Las "Leader of the Pack" with a ghetto-ass beat, but then here come the guitars and her singers. "Fergalicious"? It's like the sister of [Black Eyed Peas hit] "My Humps."

**How long have you been planning this solo record?**

**Fergie:** I always had this dream. I told my mom when I was 7 years old, but I just ended up being in bands. I'm a free spirit. I follow my heart, and it's led me to where I am now. I probably would've taken more time to finish it even though they're songs from a seven-year period, but [Interscope CEO] Jimmy Iovine heard some [tracks] and was like, "This is great, let's put it out."

**Has being in Black Eyed Peas given you the creative license to experiment with rapping?**

**Fergie:** Just being around it and living the lifestyle [with them], it felt more natural and comfortable—and not as taboo. But I've always been a fan of rappers like Roxanne Shante, Monie Love, Queen Latifah, Salt-N-Pepa—these were girls that I emulated growing up, but just more in private. BEP gave me that confidence to do it. I'm not trying to be a serious MC, that's not my goal. I'm just paying homage to everything I grew up listening to. If I didn't include that part of me, it wouldn't be a true representation of who I am.

**ON THE 'BRIDGE' THE MAKING—AND MEANING—OF A NUMBER ONE HIT**

Co-written by Sean Garrett and Polow-Freache Jones (Polow Da Don), "London Bridge" is currently No. 2 on The Billboard Hot 100 after topping the chart for three straight weeks. Much like Cassie's sensual hit "Me & U," the read-between-the-lines lyrics are obscure enough to dupe kids attracted to its throbbing bass, yet obvious enough to alarm adults.

The track was originally given to Fergie at the suggestion of Jones' manager Dominic "DJ" Mormile, head of urban A&R at Interscope. No doubt the song has been incinerating clubs and radio for the same reason it appealed to Fergie. "I loved

the horn part, I loved the sirens in the beginning, and I loved the 'oh shit' part because it was giving you that 'I don't give a fuck' mentality right from the beginning," she says.

As for the lyrical meaning, when Fergie rhymes, "How come every time you come around/My London, London Bridge, wanna go down," it's clear she's not paying homage to mother England. "There isn't any deep sentiment—it's just kind of a stupid song," Fergie says. "I'm letting people figure out their own meanings to it."

Below, three sexperts give Billboard the scoop. —CH



"Any reference in pop music to 'going down' is bound to reference oral sex . . . she's also quoting 'love you long time,' from a highly sexualized song [2 Live Crew's 'Me So Horny']."

—DR. CAROL QUEEN  
director of the Center for Sex & Culture



"The frequent references to alcohol and being drunk suggests the backdrop against which casual sex/hooking up/oral sex is likely to occur."

—sex therapist IAN KERNER,  
author of "She Comes First"



"Maybe those words just sounded good to Fergie and she liked singing them . . . At the end of the day, it's good marketing [and] a great song."

—DR. SADIE ALLISON,  
author of "Tickle His Pickle"

**Why the title "The Dutchess"?**

**Fergie:** "The Dutchess" is a play on words from the Duchess of York, but it's not to be taken literally [laughs]. If you notice, on the album cover it says "Fergie as the Dutchess" because I wanted each song to be a movie poster. But because "London Bridge" did so well so fast, we had to get everything done so only half the songs on the album have movie poster themes. For example, for "Fergalicious" I'm holding a lollipop; it's pretty campy and cute. The pictures were all shot by Ellen von Unwerth in Paris so a lot of them are very Brigitte Bardot-esque.

**How did you find time to record in between touring with the Black Eyed Peas?**

**Fergie:** A lot of it was recorded on the John Lennon studio bus. We'd go in a couple of hours before going on stage and that's how it got done. The songs span a seven-year period. Some were done before I was in the Black Eyed Peas—we just updated them, and some were done in this one-month span that we took off from touring, which is very rare for us.

Will and I moved into this studio house in Malibu called Morningview. It's like a ranch. It was very serene—complete opposite to the chaos of touring. I was alone a lot, which is something that doesn't happen to me on tour, so I got to find these emotions that are a little bit deeper than the surface. [For example], "The Makeup Song (All That I Got)" and "Velvet" are very intimate lyrically and feeling-wise. I wanted [the latter] to sound like velvet feels—very smooth—and I wanted it to be sensual.

**In your earlier days, did you always want to be an entertainer?**

**Fergie:** I was a complete ham as a child—always performing, taking whatever products were in my kitchen and doing commercials for my dad and the video camera. My parents took me to musicals at a very young age. There was a local community theater and my mom would take me to see "West Side Story," "Oklahoma," "Peter Pan," "Annie."

They would also take me to concerts like Tina Turner, Pointer Sisters and Madonna, so that was buried in principle. They don't perform but they were always music fans and loved to see shows, which was great for me. But then, I didn't want to just sit there, I wanted to do it. [Laughs]

I went to public school, and in the summer instead of going swimming I would go to the set. We worked six days a week so I had to be a little adult. I definitely think that's why I rebelled later. Since I was a child actor, I liked to people-please a lot—it's called being professional when you're younger. And I didn't know how to say no. When I was in Wild Orchid, I should have left a long time prior to when I did, but I didn't know how to. We were doing music that I wasn't really into. It wasn't fun anymore, and it wasn't a creative outlet for me so I went to other places for that.

**When and why did you decide to join the Black Eyed Peas?**

**Fergie:** I had been a fan of theirs since 1998. They were amazing dancers and MCs with this sick style, and I had put it in my mental notes that I wanted to work with them someday. One of the last shows I did with Wild Orchid—this is after I knew that I was leaving, I was just fulfilling my commitment—BEP were on the bill. It wasn't like they were the No. 1 artists at the time or anything. I was finally doing my own album, and I knew that crossing paths with them must mean something.

I approached Will in the hallway, got my hustle on and exchanged numbers. We started playing phone tag and having conversations. They needed a singer for "Shut Up," and we started working together but we didn't plan to be a band. I was still working on my solo material with Will, becoming friends with the guys and doing background on their albums. When it came time for them to tour with "Elephunk," I was a background staple. Joining a band was another commitment, but I was such a huge fan of theirs, and I thought I'd be an even better solo artist if I learned from them.

**Will:** A lot of people don't realize, but I was producing her by mid-2002, writing songs with her and, at the same time, we were recording "Elephunk." We've been trying to figure out the release since. Should we put it out after "Elephunk"? No, we still need to work as the Black Eyed Peas. We set the anchor. No matter what happened with the individual projects, we committed to the Peas.