TUNE INTO ENGLISH
Lou Reed’s Walk on the Wild Side

L’artista newyorkese ci guida nella notte più selvaggia e libertina degli anni Settanta con testi che presentano una galleria di personaggi eccentrici come artisti, truffatori e disadattati.

"Give head" (slang): un termine inglese usato per indicare l’atto di avere relazioni sessuali orali, tradotto in italiano con "affettuose parole". Il termine deriva da "giving head", che si rifà all’atto di donare, o di essere disponibili per un'attività sessuale orale.

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The track was taken from Reed’s second solo album Transformer, co-produced by David Bowie. Each of the five verses tells an anecdote about the misfits that frequented artist Andy Warhol’s Factory studio in New York.

Inspired by Nelson Algren’s 1956 novel of the same name, which describes the New Orleans underworld, the song opens with transvestite model Holly Woodlawn’s journey to the Big Apple. Further characters introduced are transgender actress Candy Darling from Long Island, who used to “give head” (slang) for oral sex at a local night club, and “Little” Joe D’Alessandro, a gay actor who appeared in a Warhol film as a rent boy.

Another Warhol film mentioned is Sugar Plum Fairy, a euphemism for a drug dealer. The final verse is about drag queen Jackie Curtis, with “speed” and “crash” being wordplay references to drugs and actor James Dean’s death in a car crash.

Lyrical approach can also be seen in the song’s story development. The chorus features “scat” singing inspired by the 1960s Motown girl groups, but was performed on the record by a trio of white girls from the UK. The word “coloured” was edited from the song by some radio stations for reasons of political correctness — surprisingly this was the only edit to its controversial lyrics. Commenting on his signature song, Lou Reed said: “I thought it would be fun to introduce people you see at parties, but don’t dare approach”.

Holly came from Miami, FLA
Hitch-hiked her way across the U.S.A.
Plucked her eyebrows on the way
Shaved her legs and then she was a she
She says, “Hey, babe
Take a walk on the wild side”
Said, “Hey, honey
Take a walk on the wild side”

Candy came from out on the island
In the back room she was everybody’s darling
But she never lost her head

Even when she was giving head
[chorus]
She says, “Hey, babe
Take a walk on the wild side”

And the colored girls go
“Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo”

Little Joe never once gave it away
Everybody had to pay and pay a hustle here and a hustle there
New York City’s the place
Where they said, “Hey, babe
Take a walk on the wild side”
I said, “Hey, Joe
Take a walk on the wild side”

Sugar Plum Fairy came and hit the streets
Looking for soul food and a place to eat
Went to the Apollo
You should’ve seen them go, go, go
They said, “Hey, sugar
Take a walk on the wild side”
I said, “Hey, babe
Take a walk on the wild side”, alright
Huh
Jackie is just speeding away
Thought she was James Dean for a day
Then I guess she had to crash
Valium would have helped that bash

[chorus]