

Queer-Diva Collaborations: Grace Jones's Queer Trifecta in "I'm Not Perfect but (I'm perfect for you)"

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Abstract

This paper explores an example of what I am calling the practice of "Queer-Diva collaboration" as it pertains to the work of Grace Jones. Queer-Diva collaborations are a surprisingly common yet undertheorized artistic phenomena wherein cis-gender female pop singers co-create pop art with members of the LGBTQ+ community. Through these collaborations, queer counterculture discourses penetrate and reshape mainstream popular culture. While much scholarship revolves around the Diva's Queer audience—namely research such as Wayne Koestenbaum's exploration of the Opera Queen in *The Queen's Throat* (2001)—this paper draws on Charles Green's theory of collaboration to highlight the Diva's crucial relationship with LGBTQ+ art directors and stylists. Green suggests that in the process of artistic collaboration, two people with different ideologies may generate "utopian modernist sites" (Green 175) which "world-make" (Green 125) upon co-creation. Building on Green's ideas, I suggest Queer-Diva co-productions have the ability to amplify and/or disturb oppressive forces and societal norms (Green, 11). This paper will highlight Queer-Diva collaboration in Jones' "I'm Not Perfect (But I'm Perfect for You)," a music video directed by Jones, co-directed and costumed by graffiti artist Keith Haring (Andy Warhol also co-art directs behind-the-scenes). This paper centers attention to the fusion of Haring's HIV/AIDS activism through art, Jones' gender blending and relaying of radical racial pluralism through performance, and Warhol's campifying of celebrity culture. Focusing on this distinctive epoch in Jones' *oeuvre*, this paper examines the effects of this Queer-Diva collaboration and asks how Jones' Queer-fueled aesthetic disrupts anti-Black, anti-Queer and heterosexist discourses.

Keywords: Queer Worldmaking, Collaboration, Gender, Feminism, Critical Race