

Shaz OYE in
conversation with Irish
Times writer Tony
Clayton - Lea 07/01/06.
Photograph by Bryan
O'Brien.



SHAZ OYE

'THE CARDS HAVE BEEN STACKED AGAINST ME. I'M A BLACK WOMAN, A LESBIAN, I'M OUT, SO I HAVE TO DRAW OUTSIDE THE LINES'

"I've been doing music since 2003, which is the year I put out my first EP. For the past two years I've been gigging around the country, building a profile, and am now putting the finishing touches to an album that will be released early this year. I feel that I've been given a gift of music. When I sing I can see people respond to my voice. I feel I have an ethical responsibility to exploit that and to realise my potential. That sounds a bit corny, but that's the drive behind my trying to build a career in the music industry. The material I write, a lot of which is issues based, draws on my experience of the world. Some of the themes might deal with the darker side of humanity, but I am trying to reflect the world as I see it. I hope that when the album comes out it resonates with people. Success for me in the future is more a question of when than if. I absolutely believe that. I'm very positive about creative and commercial success. I would hope that I would get to the stage where it is easier to achieve airplay through radio, for example, and where it's easier to get burns on seats for live gigs. They're the obstacles I'm coming up against at the moment. As I build the profile, and as people become more aware of my work, and hopefully like and respond to it, those things

will become easier.

"I've always believed that determination is one of the cornerstones of success. You've got to have a dogged self-belief for anything you want to be successful at. Increasingly, it is becoming the case to have to think creatively of ways that circumvent the system. In the commercial media, there are more journalists covering more entertainment for more media outlets, yet, conversely, the public has less choice in respect of the artists they are exposed to. I can circumvent that primarily by drawing outside the lines. I have always done that."

"To a degree, because of the system, the cards have been stacked against me. I'm a black woman, a lesbian, I'm out, so I've always felt that I have to draw outside the lines. Having said that, there are individuals within the media, particularly within radio, who are very supportive of new artists, independent artists and new Irish music. So far they have been very helpful, and it's incumbent on independent artists to work with those people to create a better system that we can all work within."

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