

## CPYU 3(D) REVIEW

### Song/Video: "Womanizer" by Britney Spears

**Background/summary:** Britney Spears' handlers have launched an all-out effort to return the fallen pop princess to a position of dominance in preparation for the release of her sixth studio album, *Circus*, on December 2 of this year. The first single – "Womanizer" – was pre-released off the album on September 26, making a record-breaking leap from #96 to #1 on *Billboard's* Hot 100 chart on October 15, the same day that Spears launched her brand new interactive website. The song is Spears first #1 single on the Hot 100 since her debut single, "Baby One More Time." "Womanizer's" first-week download tally was the biggest ever by a female artist. Look for the November 30 MTV documentary on Spears – *For The Record* – to further fuel the singer's resurgence. Like it or not, Britney Spears is back.

#### Discover: What is the message/worldview?:

- The song is a full-on assault on males who are womanizers. The video's male character represents all womanizing males in our culture as Spears pounds him with an unmistakable lyrical and visual message appropriately embedded in a hard-beating dance tune. She tells him, "You can play brand new to all the other chicks out here/ But I know what you are, what you are. . . .You're a womanizer." This is a girl-power anthem.
- The Spears who's singing the tune is the real Britney Spears, visually portrayed fully nude throughout the video, as her sweat-covered body writhes suggestively on a sauna bench as she teases the camera and everyone behind it.
- Interspersed with these images is an unfolding story of a young male advertising executive (the target for her message) who wakes up at home and then leaves for the office and a day full of womanizing, going from one woman to another, all of whom are portrayed by Spears.
- The main character played by Spears is his female companion who's been cheated on and wronged. She cooks him breakfast as she sings her message, all while again dressed, singing, and moving seductively, this time while wearing a skimpy little open robe.
- He leaves the house and enters into a series of encounters with dominating and seductively tough take-charge females (all played by Spears) who tease him, then walk away. First there's the naughty secretary who answers his advances with a lap dance, followed by the put off. He goes to lunch and encounters the same with a tattooed waitress who takes him into the kitchen, throws him down on a prep table, and then eagerly climbs on top. She seductively eats a cherry then shows him the stem twisted in a knot, signifying a message that says, "You're going to miss out on what I can do with my tongue." Finally, a female limo driver jumps in the back seat with him for a make-out session, all the while steering the car with her stiletto heels. His fear of crashing forces him to focus on getting away from the girl and to the wheel.
- As the video ends, the man comes home and is confronted by Spears and all her other characters, driving home the "you can try but you're not getting any. . . you womanizer!" message of the song.

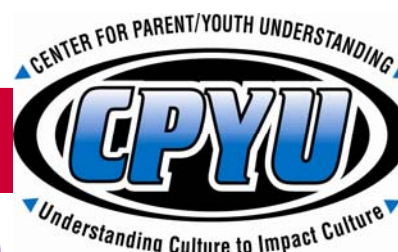


### Discern: How does it stand in light of the biblical message/worldview?

- On the positive side, the song's lyrics and many of the story's visuals *do* issue a value judgment against flirting, cheating, objectification, lust, and sexual promiscuity. Womanizing is definitely cast in a negative light. The Biblical call to relational and sexual faithfulness affirms these morals.
- Still, the video's message is one of great contradiction and irony as Spears goes as far as is permissible visually as the naked, teasing sexual object. . . thereby inviting everything she's at the same time condemning. This imagery is sure to do two things besides proving that Spears is on the hunt for renewed commercial success: 1) fuel the lustful fantasies of male viewers. . . . particularly very impressionable children and teens, and 2) foster the fast-spreading culturally defined gender role for females who are told to engage in visual "foreplay" as the objectified boy-toy, but then walk away as a way to exert sexual dominance and power over males.
- The video presents terribly destructive a-biblical solutions to real-world problems that exist in today's youth culture. It is not right to choose a "solution" or "response" to the reality of womanizing, unfaithfulness, objectification, and sexual dominance by choosing means that lead to the end of an equally immoral resolution. In the video, these faulty means include gender role reversal as females are encouraged to tease ("come and get me, you can have me"), dominate (Spears is always aggressive, tough, and on top in her portrayed personas), launch the God-ordained biochemical reaction to sexual foreplay. . . . and then walk away. The video is filled – from start to finish – with horribly flawed portrayals of identity and sexual expression.
- God has ordained the process of adolescent physical development. It is a curious and confusing time that requires Biblically sound instruction, guidance, and input. Sadly, the void of healthy role models will lead sexually developing and curious teens to turn to the video as a foundational definer of gender roles, sexual values, and parameters for sexual behavior.

### Decide: What do I do with it?

- "Womanizer" is one of the edgiest music videos ever produced and mass-marketed. When the young target age for Spears musical audience is figured into the equation, it is devastating to think about the possible immediate and long-term fallout as the video shapes the worldviews of children and teens. This presents parents and youth workers with a deep dilemma. **On the one hand, this video would be considered by many to be pornographic. Yet, it is a pervasive and increasingly familiar mainstream cultural force.** We must discuss the song and its message with kids. **However, be very, very careful in regards to your choice to view the video, either by yourself or with kids.**
- Parents and youth workers must grapple with the fact that music and music video – including "Womanizer" – is offering a powerful road map for young females. We must correct the erroneous messages of this map (which requires familiarity with the map), pointing kids by our word and example to finding their identity in Christ and Christ alone.
- The video raises several very real cultural issues our parenting and ministries must address in order to offer clarity and truth in a very confused world: these include but are not limited to sexual identity, gender roles, love, commitment, sex, revenge, conflict resolution, grace, and redemption.
- "Womanizer" should lead us to grieve for our kids and our culture. But we must not stop there. We must pray for our kids, for Britney Spears, and for her captive young audience. We must answer "Womanizer's" message and the cultural realities that occasioned it with the Truth of God's Word.



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