

CPYU 3(D) REVIEW

Song/Video: "Is Anybody Out There?" by K'Naan ft. Nelly Furtado

by Walt Mueller

Background/summary: Originally released as a digital audio single on 1/24/2012, this collaboration between Somali-born rapper K'Naan and pop singer Nelly Furtado visually and lyrically captures and addresses the brokenness felt by far too many kids in today's world. Released in video format on 3/1/2012, the song has not received much attention or critical acclaim. Still, it has reached #1 on the charts in some European countries, and has developed a strong following among kids whose lives are reflected in the song's themes.

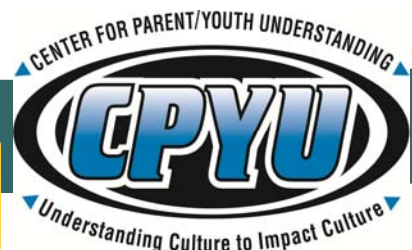
Discover: What is the message/worldview?:

- The video weaves together the stories of two broken, confused, and disenfranchised teenagers. Mary is a forlorn and lonely girl who hides behind baggy clothes and hooded sweatshirts. Adam is an angry young man who is at odds with a father who is physically present but emotionally absent. Adam finds release for his anger by playing video games in his room and by escape through drugs.
- Mary's visual story begins in a quickmart where she's thumbing through a magazine. An angry clerk throws her out. Wandering the street, she passes the local café where her more popular and socially-connected teenage peers are hanging out, laughing, and trading the latest gossip. When she stops to stare in the café window, the girls inside say "That girl is weird," and "What a skank!" Mary uses lipstick to write "S.T.F.U." on the window, gives them the finger, and then moves on. K'Naan sings, "Something 'bout Mary/Never won a pageant/Never felt pretty. . . Always been abandoned." He goes on to lyrically criticize Mary's accusers, reminding them that their taunts are rooted in their own insecurity.
- Adam is shown making a phone call to secure drugs. He angrily engages in video-gaming in his room as his dad wanders past his door, pausing to give a silent, angry stare at his son. K'Naan sings, "His name was Adam/When his mom had him/Dad was a phantom/Never took a look at him/Grew up mad and antisocial. . . Adam was lonely/Drugs were the only/Way out of his own life." K'Naan goes on to describe how Adam is "close to retire," or considering ending his life.
- The visual story continues with Mary sitting alone in a playground. Eventually, she is standing in front of mirror applying lipstick in an effort to beautify herself. She angrily and hopelessly smears it off.
- When Adam goes to make his drug connection, he encounters his own father there buying drugs for himself. After his father completes his transaction, he turns to have his eyes meet his son's eyes. Adam looks on in disgust and disdain.
- Throughout the song, K'Naan and Furtado speak for the disenfranchised youth: "I don't wanna be left in this war tonight/Am I alone in this fight?/Is anybody out there?/Don't wanna be left in this world behind/Say you'll run to my side/Is anybody out there?" The singers appeal to listeners to step in and love the loveless: "He's (She's) really counting on your love/Still struggling uphill/But you act like you don't care/Right now he (she) could really use a shoulder/Hanging onto the edge til it's over/He's (She's) crying for your love tonight/Loneliest heart to survive." The song ends with these words: "I need your love to take me home/No one said you should be all alone/I'm right here. . . Is anybody out there?"



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

- “Is Anybody Out There?” is a song that accurately captures aspects of the deep brokenness that exists in our world as result of humankind’s fall into sin (Genesis 3:6). The “Shalom” (or God-made universal flourishing that existed in God’s perfect creation) has been shattered. Things are not the way they are supposed to be. The video depicts the resulting alienation that exists. . . alienation between human beings and God, human-to-human alienation, family alienation, and the alienation we experience with our selves. Because it depicts the truth of our brokenness, this is a video and song that will connect deeply with those who experience the depths of brokenness portrayed in the song.
- God’s heart aches for those who are broken. He is described as the “father of the fatherless and a protector of widows” (Psalm 68:5). We know that “the Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit” (Psalm 34:18). In the same way, Jesus calls his followers in all times and all places to share his heart for the brokenhearted. In a world where we are nurtured into the narcissistic lie that we are to look out for ourselves and no other, Jesus calls us to live out the “great commandment” to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” . . . and to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:30&31).
- While K’Naan and Nelly Furtado issue a strong and commendable call to love the unloved, we know that human love can never fully redeem and heal. Human love, fellowship, and connections are only the best they can be when made in the context of a life-giving relationship with the one true Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Adam, Mary, and all broken kids are looking ultimately for a connection with the One who is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

Decide: What do I do with it?

- We need to develop a heart for the broken-hearted. That heart must result in aggressive relationship-building and ministry. This song and video can be shown to those ignorant of these realities, offering them a doorway into realizing that this world does indeed exist. Watch the video with your church staff, congregation, parents, youth staff, and students. Then, invite each group to prayerfully discuss, pray through, and enact Biblically informed responses to these cultural realities.
- The video can be used to draw out students locked in the silence of their own prison of brokenness. Show the video and then ask, “Where do you see yourself in this song?” Since music often puts into words things that kids can’t find words for themselves, be ready for some frank and emotional conversations.
- The “Is Anybody Out There” video offers a strong and usable teaching tool for use in youth ministry. Show the video to your group, then launch into discussions on sin, body image, peer pressure, bullying, cliques, self-image, identity formation, compassion, and mission.
- The video offers a biting commentary on the contemporary state of fatherhood in our culture. This is a video worth showing to groups of fathers. Ask them to consider their own fathering habits, patterns, and behaviors, challenging them to make corrections or ask forgiveness where needed. Use the video to inspire men and women to mentor the disconnected who live in their midst.

Dr. Walt Mueller is the president of the Center for Parent/Youth Understanding.



Scan this code to watch the “Is Anybody Out There” video.

Scan this code to access info on the *How to Use Your Head to Guard Your Heart 3(D)* Media Evaluation Guide.

