

Charlotte Church: Young Stars Forced to Be 'Hypersexualized'

British singer Charlotte Church has spoken out against the pressure on young female pop stars to sell themselves as sex objects, in a lecture for BBC 6 Music.

She talked about her own experience of being pushed into wearing inappropriate clothes as a young artist by industry bosses.

She said record labels are encouraging singers "to present themselves as hypersexualized, unrealistic, cartoonish, as objects, reducing female sexuality to a prize you can win."

She explained: "When I was 19 or 20 I found myself in this position, being pressurized into wearing more and more revealing outfits.

"The lines that I had spun at me again and again—generally by middle-aged men—were: 'You look great, you've got a great body, why not show it off?

"Or: 'Don't worry, it will look classy, it will look artistic.' I felt deeply uncomfortable about the whole thing, but I was often reminded by record label executives just whose money was being spent."

The singer, now 27, said young female artists were routinely "coerced into sexually demonstrative behavior in order to hold on to their careers."

In a feature for the *Daily Record* newspaper, a former music magazine editor said artists are dressed provocatively because "sex sells."

John McKie said: "In a sense, this OTT imagery comes from a place of fear as the record company and artist have to do everything they can to make the record sell."

And medical psychology professor Andrew Hill said that sexualized images can have a powerful influence on children and that there are "intense pressures" on both sexes to conform to what they see.

He said: "There's a tendency for us to look at others and compare our adequacy and to look to how we might change and improve ourselves."

He added: "That's alive and kicking and it's very important for adolescents. We can pick it up at pre-teen age."

Church's comments come as fellow star Annie Lennox also hit out at the sexualization of pop videos.

Lennox said some music videos have become "highly styled pornography with musical accompaniment," and should be subject to an age-rating system.

It follows a recent controversial dance routine by Miley Cyrus which was highly sexualized.

A columnist in the *Daily Mail* said the "young and vulnerable" should be shielded from things they "lack the maturity to understand."

Sarah Vine said, "I can't bear to think of my 10-year-old debasing herself in the style of Cyrus."