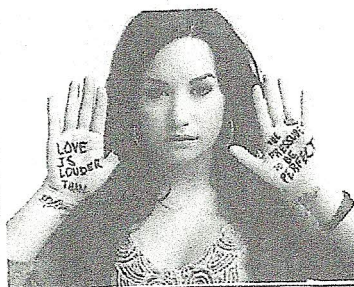


Demi Lovato: In Her Own Words

by Bethany Heitman



It was during one of these pageants that 7-year-old Demi and her mom heard that the show *Barney and Friends* was holding a casting call in town. They decided to check it out, and she landed a role.

Demi appeared on two seasons before her family moved to Los Angeles so she could pursue acting and singing more seriously. "I started auditioning for commercials and television roles. Then around the age of 14, I tested for *Hannah Montana*," she says. "I wound up not getting it, but that's how Disney learned about me. I kept reading for things, and I got a role in the Disney TV movie *Camp Rock*, costarring with the Jonas Brothers, and the lead in *Sonny With a Chance*."

Tiffany Thornton, who costarred on *Sonny With a Chance*, says everyone liked Demi from the start. "The first time the cast met, she was so bubbly and very lovable," says Tiffany. "She has this energy that draws people to her."

For the next three years, Demi worked nonstop filming her show, making two records, and touring.

But being a major teen sensation wasn't always easy. "No one ever pressured me at Disney, but I did feel pressure being with the

channel," she says. "They didn't have everyone sign contracts saying we'd wear purity rings, but I think it was expected that we wouldn't get into trouble."

Demi, who was already dealing with some secret issues, felt hemmed in and frustrated.

PROVING SHE'S UNBREAKABLE

The pop star admits that during most of her Disney years, she suffered from anorexia and bulimia. "Around 12, I started getting bullied and was called fat. Soon after, I lost

Bi-Polar 411:

- It is a mood disorder thought to be caused by chemical imbalances in the brain that can result in extreme swings in mood—from manic highs to depressive lows.
- Symptoms include: periods of extreme happiness then extreme depression, sleeplessness, mood swings, poor decision making, sleeping issues, feeling worthless

like 30 pounds," she says. "When I got a little older, I started throwing up." During these years, Demi also began cutting herself and has admitted to partying quite a bit.

It all came to a head at the end of 2010, when people close to Demi held an intervention of sorts. "My family expected me to fight them on going to treatment," she says. "They were going to call the cops if I refused, but I went willingly."

Demi checked into the treatment center thinking she was there to deal with her eating disorder and self-harm issues, but after being evaluated, she learned she also suffered from bipolar disorder.

"I felt relieved when I found out," she says, leaning forward. "Like I'm not completely crazy; there's a medical reason for all of it."

She spent three months in treatment and now says she will be in recovery forever. "It's a daily thing; you don't get time off from it. And if I feel myself slipping back into old patterns, I have to ask others for help," Demi says, "which is hard for me to learn, because I really like doing everything on my own."

As for going public with her problems, Demi never considered not being truthful. "Hiding it wouldn't have been good for me or my fans, so I chose to talk about it," she says.

After she finished treatment, Demi took a few months off before pouring herself into her music. She says it felt great to get back in the studio and thinks the entire experience made her rethink the purpose of her career. "It's not just about singing anymore," she says. "I want to inspire people."

Clearly, she has. When Demi released *Unbroken*, there was an outpouring of support. Fans and critics applauded her frank lyrics in songs like "Skyscraper," where she sings, "Go on and try to tear me down / I will be rising from the ground, like a skyscraper." Demi's music hits such a nerve, women regularly tweet her, saying her empowering lyrics have helped them deal with their own issues.

Fellow pop star Kelly Clarkson thinks that authenticity is what makes Demi special. "She is exactly the same on- and offstage. There are no surprises with her," Kelly says.

Eventually, Demi wants to get back into acting, but for now, she's content with focusing on her music. "When I combine the two, I get overworked and that's not fun. So for the next year, it's all about singing. Other than that, I have no plans. I just want to see where my career takes me."

Casually leaning back in a booth at a trendy New York City restaurant, Demi Lovato is trying to sum up the past 18 months of her life. "So much has happened, and I'm really glad it's over," she says, running a hand through her long hair. "It's been tough, but I'm excited to be in a more healthy, positive place."

Of course, she's referring to her stay at a treatment center at the end of 2010, where she sought help for an eating disorder as well as cutting and where she was diagnosed as being bipolar.

While that stuff is pretty heavy, what's fearless about the 19-year-old is that she's been completely honest about it from the get-go. Rather than go the route of so many celebs—who either claim they're suffering from exhaustion or release generic statements thought up by their PR team—Demi has been up front about everything. That same openness

brings rare authenticity to her songs, which are packed with emotional lyrics that resonate with her fans.

Her most recent album, *Unbroken*, debuted in the top five on the Billboard charts, and she is currently on tour promoting it. Then, this September, she'll join Britney Spears, L.A. Reid, and Simon Cowell as a judge on Fox's popular show *The X-Factor*.

In the realm of Hollywood, where so much seems manufactured and fake, Demi has managed to keep both her personal and professional lives so real. "I'm very independent," she says, "and I

have a very close relationship with my fans and am always honest with them."

PAGEANT GIRL TURNED POP STAR

Raised in Dallas by her mother and stepfather, Demi always knew she wanted to be a performer. "I sang in my first talent show at 5 and was hooked," she says.

Her mom, a former country singer, was totally supportive of Demi's dream and helped her start auditioning. In between trying out for roles, Demi participated in beauty pageants but is very insistent that they weren't like the crazy ones on TLC. "I didn't get a fake tan or wear extensions. I liked it because I could perform during the talent

3 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT DEMI

1. The first thing she does after getting off stage is hit the shower.
2. She gets most emotional while singing "Fix a Heart."
3. Two musicians she loves: Lady Antebellum and Rihanna.