

LYRICS: Women, look out

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nowadays, it's not just a man's realm.

"In other words, women are becoming players and macks too," writes Davey D on his Web site, www.daveyd.com.

Universally popular female rappers like Lauryn Hill represent truth and intelligence. It's music about setting one's life straight and wising up to politics and social problems. Then there are the artists who prefer to talk about another kind of truth — the mix between sex, power and money.

Nowadays, the quickest way to sell these themes is the most blatant, especially in hip-hop. Innuendo is gone and everything bubbles to the surface. The songs illustrate, sometimes in a demeaning way, an age-old fear men and women have in relationships: Is she only after me for my money? Is he only wining and dining me for sex?

I recently heard a new song that

goes, "If I buy you a drink and you drink it up, girl you're going home with me."

Actually, no. The only thing that happens is you're out of cash. That's what a strong woman says. But how many kids are saying that? How many are, instead, learning that "this is just the way it works"?

As a journalist, I believe in free speech. I just wonder if people get what they're listening to. I wonder whether they're ready to separate the positive messages of playfulness and sexual assertiveness from the negative ones of sex as a business deal.

I don't know whether young teens understand the music. I don't know if it changes their view of the opposite sex.

But one thing's clear: With so much aggression and selfishness accompanying it, the slathering of sexuality all over the radio isn't liberating. I love to listen, but as a woman, I'm constantly watching my back.