

Listening Guide



Queen Latifah, “Ladies First” Tommy Boy 1022

Words and music by Shane Faber, Mark James, Simone Johnson, Dana Owens, and Anthony Peaks. Produced by DJ Mark the 45 King. From the album *All Hail the Queen*, which rose to #6 on the *Billboard* “Soul LPs” chart in 1989 (p124).

FORM: Simple verse, divided into three sections and an ending; each section closes with the catch phrase “Ladies first,” which acts like a refrain. The first section begins with the introduction and then presents verses one and two. The second section begins with a short instrumental interlude that leads into verses three and four. The interlude that leads into verses five, six, and seven is extended to 16 measures, and contains a 4/4-measure rhythm break. The ending uses the same material as the intro and interludes and fades out. Queen Latifah shares rapping duties with Monie Love and the lines are based on 4-measure units, often with a rhythm break marking the fourth bar. Note how Latifah stretches verse one by two measures and how the two rappers move between verses throughout.

TIME SIGNATURE: 4/4, with a strong funk groove.

INSTRUMENTATION: Drums, saxes, synthesizer, electric guitar, electric bass, voices. Much of the instrumental material is drawn from samples that are recombined to form the backing track. Even though the instrumental accompaniment is very repetitive, note how elements come in and out of the texture, creating constant variation behind the vocal.

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0:00–0:18	Introduction , 8 mm.	Drums and bass establish groove, sax samples.
0:18–0:31	Verse 1 , 6 mm.	Queen Latifah enters, the 4 mm. phrase is extended by 2 mm. “The ladies will kick it . . .”
0:31–0:49	Verse 2 , 8 mm.	Monie Love takes over; the verse ends with the catch phrase, “Ladies first.” “Excuse me but . . .”
0:49–0:54	Interlude , 2 mm.	Sampled “TV/radio voice” over groove. “There’s gonna be some changes . . .”
0:54–1:12	Verse 3 , 8 mm.	Monie Love continues, “Believe me . . .”
1:12–1:29	Verse 4 , 8 mm.	Queen Latifah takes over, the verse ends with “Ladies first.” “I break into . . .”
1:29–2:05	Interlude , 16 mm.	8 mm. of groove + 4 mm. of rhythm break + 4 mm. of groove.
2:05–2:23	Verse 5 , 8 mm.	Queen Latifah continues, “Who said that the ladies . . .”
2:23–2:59	Verse 6 , 16 mm.	Monie Love takes over, “Praise me not . . .”
2:59–3:17	Verse 7 , 8 mm.	Queen Latifah takes over, the verse ends with “Ladies first.” “Contact and in fact . . .”
3:17–3:52	Ending , 16 mm. and fade	8 mm. of groove, then 4 mm. rhythm break, then 4 mm. of groove and fade.