

Madonna mauls Eminem's critics

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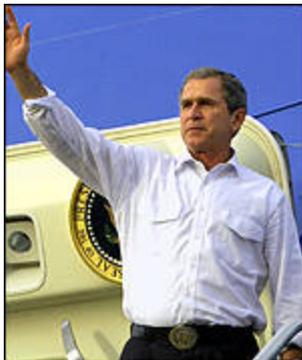
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/1180471.stm>

Madonna has defended controversial rapper Eminem in a letter to a US newspaper - saying she finds the language of George W Bush "much more offensive".

The singer joined Sir Elton John, Stevie Wonder and Randy Newman in praising the rapper, who is nominated for four Grammys at Wednesday's ceremony.

The Los Angeles Times asked more than a dozen former Grammy winners for their views of Eminem's music in response to criticism by songwriter Jimmy Webb, who said the rapper could devalue the ceremony's "moral credibility".

But of the four who replied, all backed the hip-hop star.



"Since when is offensive language a reason for being unpopular? I find the language of George W much more offensive," Madonna wrote.

"I like the fact that Eminem is brash and angry and politically incorrect. At least he has an opinion. He's stirring things up, he's making people's blood boil, he's reflecting on what's going on in society right now. This is what art's supposed to do.

"And after all, he's just a boy," she said of the 28-year-old.

Sir Elton John - who is performing with Eminem on Wednesday - called The Marshall Mathers LP "the album of the year" and said: "There is far more humour on the album than people think. It appeals to my English black sense of humour."

He added that he "was in hysterics from laughing" the first time he heard the album.

"We live in an age of political correctness where you can't say this or that. I honestly don't think people will go out and start beating and killing people because of this album."

Stevie Wonder said: "For someone to say, this is a disgrace to the Grammys, come on. There was a time when blues was called a disgrace."

Randy Newman doubted Eminem would receive a Grammy for best album as "the voters are too conservative" but said: "I don't know from his work that he genuinely hates women or his mother, but I know that he's funny."

I just hope that he doesn't think he has to live the lifestyle," he added.



Eminem, whose real name is Marshall Mathers III, has three Grammy nominations for The Marshall Mathers LP, including album of the year, best rap album, and best rap solo performance.

He was also nominated for best rap performance and best rap performance by a duo or group for the track Forget About Dre on Dr Dre's album Dr Dre - 2001.

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Gay campaign

Last week, gay campaigners urged Sir Elton John to ditch his planned duet with Eminem as a "beacon of courage".

Gay and Lesbian Alliance director Joan Garry also sent Sir Elton a "collection of hate e-mails" she received from Eminem fans and asked him to think "how literally" they take the rapper's "violent" words.

Dr Dre, who produced Eminem's debut album *The Slim Shady LP*, is nominated for five Grammys.

Eminem has divided audiences who feel his work is either that of a satirical genius or a sexist homophobe.

His songs are a mix of offensive language, violence and self-effacement.

But are Marshall Mathers' words Miltonic or just mediocre? Here are a selection of his more printable lyrics:

"You can't run from me Kim. It's just us, nobody else! You're only making this harder on yourself. Ha! Ha Gotcha!" - Kim

Eminem describes the violent death of a woman who shares the same name as his real-life wife.

"You think I give a damn about a Grammy. Half of you critics can't even stomach me, let alone stand me - The Real Slim Shady

Eminem attacks the record industry, criticising it for marketing fabricated stars. The artificial nature of the industry is a common theme in his music.

"Now follow me and do exactly what you see. Don't you want to grow up just like me! I slap women and eat 'shrooms then OD. Now don't you wanna grow up to be just like me!" - Role model

Eminem takes the copycat nature of fans as a starting point, but he's not afraid to poke fun at the cult surrounding his own fame.

"I'm bout as normal as Norman Bates, with deformative traits." - Role Model



Amidst the violent imagery and offensive language, Eminem threads in some intricate rhyming structures.

"And all of this controversy circles me. And it seems like the media immediately points at me. So I point one back at 'em. But not the index or the pinky or the ring or the thumb." - The Way I Am

The singer defends himself against all his detractors with a clever verbal/visual backlash.

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Reading and Responding

- 1) What does the song writer Jimmy Webb mean when he says that Eminem will devalue the ceremony's "moral credibility"?
- 2) What does Sir Elton John mean when he says that the music appeals to his "black sense of humour"?
- 3) What does political correctness mean?
- 4) Why do you think members of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance wanted Sir Elton John to cancel his duet with Eminem?
- 5) Review the selection of lyrics towards the end of the article. What are your views on his words? Do you find them offensive?
- 6) Do you think that the risk of "copy cat fans" is a real one?
- 7) Use a dictionary to find the meaning of following words or phrases.
 - Controversial
 - Conservative
 - Beacon of courage
 - Literally
 - Sexist
 - Homophobe
 - Self-effacement
 - Fabricated stars
 - Violent imagery
 - Cult
- 8) Produce a written response to the article. This could be in the form of a letter to the editor of a magazine, or a newspaper article.