

# Music

## Vomit Dichotomy

Oct 26 '03

**The Bottom Line** Under no circumstances miss a chance to see this band. I can't promise you'll like it, but I can promise it will not be a regular show.

If you've heard of them, but never seen them, then make no mistake: the rumors are true. They really do throw up. And not a little bit of vomit in the corner. A sea of vomit covering the floor, the equipment, the drum set, the members of the band, the audience. They'll set up a "puke bucket", but the puke will never stay in the bucket. They really do eat light bulbs and hot dogs with motor oil for ketchup.

And if you have heard of them, then it hasn't just been in passing. Vomit Dichotomy gets a reaction. You don't shrug about Vomit Dichotomy. You immediately understand what they're all about and throw up in the bucket with them or you cover your ears and run from the room. You swallow their music with the same ferocity that they swallow beer, whiskey, and broken glass, or you angrily accuse them of being horrible noisecore trash with a GG Allin ripoff attitude.

If you're never heard of them, then you've probably already gathered that Vomit Dichotomy is more than a band. And not the way that the Dave Matthews Band is called "more than a band"...Vomit Dichotomy is the real thing. Music is not even the reason you go to see a Vomit Dichotomy show, although their brand of truly brutal hardcore assault, with lyrics chronicling inquiries ranging from whether rehab is open to how that robin turned into a recycling bin, is by no means shabby. The reason you go to see Vomit Dichotomy is to see a band and crowd shove each other to the edge of complete riot--and then look around at the end of the set to see the lights come on to a crowd that may be exhausted and disturbed and swimming in puke, but ultimately still okay. Some stuff got broken, but nobody died. And it's f--king incredible.

Vomit Dichotomy the band cannot be separated from Vomit Dichotomy the legend. Originally all members of the band, plus an assorted sampling of friends and acquaintances--between six and twelve at any given time, all told--lived in the same infamous tiny three-bedroom apartment, dubbed House, in Portland Maine. House was short-lived, and the former residents have gone separate ways, but it remains a symbol of a sort of twisted ideal of madness. For a while, some of the most purely crazy people you would ever want to meet were all centralized in one location where spear throwing contests could be held in the bathroom, industrial sized trash buckets could be filled to overflowing with beer cans by the end of every day, and someone could decide that

having a full set of teeth was too much of a hassle and proceed to tear out every one except the front four. (I've seen the pictures.)

And even though Vomit Dichotomy doesn't play around that much anymore, their legend will continue for a small generation of whacked out punk kids who instinctively understand why a collection of intelligent college graduates would want to spend their time throwing up all over their audience.

## **Ford Drops Marketing Deal with Obscene Rapper**

**9-2-05**

Ford Motor Company is to be congratulated for making the responsible decision earlier this week to distance itself from vulgar rapper Eminem. Ford was planning to feature one of its new Fusion vehicles in an Eminem music video, but pulled the plug on the marketing plan when they heard and read the lyrics to the song, "A-- Like That," according to World Net Daily.

Such displays of corporate responsibility deserve credit and praise.

Go to <http://www.ford.com/en/support/emailUs.htm> to contact Ford online.

## **Parental Advisories & Musical Recordings**

The need for warning labels on music CD's—how did we get here? You might think that a band with a name like Eminem or Kid Rock might be recording for kids, but not so, not by a long shot. If ever there was a time when parents need to listen and scrutinize what their kids are listening to, the time is now.

Fortunately, the music industry agrees and created the Parental Advisory voluntary system that is designed to give parents a “heads up” on music recordings that may not be suitable for children. Unfortunately, this system is voluntary. No one regulates compliance with the system.

In other words, if a music recording has a sticker, it is sure to contain inappropriate language, references to drug use, and/or references to sex on it. If a recording does not have a sticker, then the only way to find out it contains any of the above or if it is inappropriate for your child is to listen to it yourself.

One other word of caution: due to the system being voluntary, retailers are not required to display Parental Advisories. What this means for the consumer is that just because you can't see a Parental Advisory sticker, doesn't mean that there is not one on the product under a store or price sticker.

Bottom line: look at packages before and after you purchase them, and listen to the music—make informed decisions for your child and family. No one can do it for you!

--Shelley Butler is co-author of the Parents' Choice Award-winning book, **THE FIELD GUIDE TO PARENTING: A COMPREHENSIVE HANDBOOK OF GREAT IDEAS, ADVICE, TIPS AND SOLUTIONS FOR PARENTING CHILDREN AGES ONE TO FIVE** with Deb Kratz, published by Chandler House Press, 2000.

## **CD Parent Advisory Labels**

Whether or not you believe that music has an influence on the minds and actions of teens, you cannot dispute the fact that Parental Advisory Labels have been a controversial topic for over a decade. In 1985, the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) made an agreement with the National Parent Teacher Association and the Parents' Music Resource Center (PMRC) stating that music recordings containing explicit content would be identified with a permanent label to help parents regulate what their children listen to. The term "explicit content" refers to music that contains specific depictions of violence, sex, profanity, and/or drug use.

If you find yourself wondering whether or not your parents would understand the implications of a label that simply states "Parental Advisory: Explicit Content", you're not alone. Most experts and critics alike feel the label is too vague, and that it doesn't offer any information at all. Of all the rating systems of movies, television, and video games, it's not surprising that the music-recording industry's label is the least useful and detailed. Critics also say that ratings can cause a "boomerang or forbidden-fruit effect" limiting what can actually attract children.

Do you wonder what the artists think about these Parental Advisory Labels? Could they have a dramatic effect on record sales? Some artists actually appreciate the fact that the labeling system is a voluntary program that has a goal to help families with young children, instead of seeking to censor the artist's work. If you look at the issue of advisory labels, the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) made a fair compromise, respecting the freedom of expression of the artist, while also respecting the needs of parents.

The purpose of advisory labels may be well intended, but is the music-recording industry really keeping the explicit material out of young kids' hands? The Recording Industry Association of America doesn't represent the record retailers, but it does work closely with the National Association of Recording Merchandisers (NARM). Depending on the retail outlet, stores may or may not carry CD's with the Parental Advisory Label. The stores that carry records with the labels often have in-store policies restricting the sale of the labeled records to those under the age of 18. However, critics observe that most record stores will sell a labeled CD to a minor without carding them. So, even though stores might have strict policies many appear to not enforce them.

As a teen consumer, beware! Studies have found that the average teen listens to music on the average of 40 hours per week! That's almost as much time as you sleep! To date, no studies have documented a cause-and-effect relationship between sexually or violently explicit lyrics and adverse behavioral effects, but we all know how music can effect our emotions.

## **Parental Advisory Labels**

In 1990, the U.S. recording industry introduced Parent Advisory labels to identify music containing explicit lyrics, including depictions of violence and sex.

For consumers, the system has its drawbacks. Companies and artists voluntarily label their products, so customers can't automatically assume that music without a label will be appropriate for all ages.

And the retail industry is also inconsistent in dealing with Parental Advisory labels. Some have policies forbidding the sale of labelled music to kids younger than 18. A few retail chains, such as K-Mart and Wal-Mart, will not carry stickered products. While others have no restrictions to stop children of any age from purchasing CDs with advisory labels.

Critics charge that although the music industry warns parents of inappropriate lyrics with labels, at the same time it's aggressively marketing explicit music to young people. In September 2000, the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) released a report showing how media industries, including the music industry, aggressively market media meant for adults to young children.

Of the 55 music recordings with explicit labels the FTC examined, all were targeted to children under 17. Marketing plans included placing advertising in media that would reach a majority or a substantial percentage of children under 17.

### **Inappropriate Content**

Pushing the boundaries for artistic expression has always been a part of popular music. In the music industry today, however, it's often the drive for profits that is pushing the envelope of what is acceptable. In this section we examine some of the issues in today's music that parents should be aware of.

### **Explicit Lyrics**

Eminem "Music has always had the power to strike fear into parents' hearts, which is why it is so attractive to young people. This hasn't changed since the days when the Beatles shocked the world. What has changed is that popular music lyrics have become much more explicit.

Heavy metal, shock-rock and rap have received the most criticism for lyrics with graphic references to drugs, sex, violence, and hate aimed at women, minorities, gays and lesbians.

Once relegated to the fringes, profanity- and hate-filled "rage" music has entered the mainstream of popular culture and has become the cash cow of the music industry. Artists like Eminem, Limp Bizkit and Slip Knot sell millions of records by giving direction to the anger and aggression in their mostly-male adolescent audiences.

The midriff-baring Christina Aguilera and Britney Spears may be marketed under a "girl power" guise—but what they are really selling to their mostly pre-pubescent audiences is adult sexuality.

To censor or not to censor? This is the thorny question parents face when their kids bring home music they find offensive. Should freedom of expression override house rules based on what parents feel are appropriate values for their kids?

As your kids get older, these questions should be discussed and debated openly. Discuss the lyrics of artists you find objectionable, and express your feelings about stereotyping and violence in music recordings and videos. Look for a consensus that is acceptable to both parents and kids.

## **Music Videos**

“ChristineAguileravideo”

Music videos are a powerful medium because they combine the energy of music with the power of visual images. While kids often don't pay a lot of attention to the lyrics of their favourite songs, the visual images that accompany the same music on TV have a much greater impact because they are impossible to ignore.

Many Canadian radio stations will not play music with explicit lyrics, but young children can easily access music by controversial artists such as Eminem, Kid Rock and Marilyn Manson by watching their music videos on television.

According to a study by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), up to 75 per cent of music videos contain sexually suggestive material. Women are often portrayed in a sexist manner, and alcohol and tobacco use is frequently glamorized. More than 50 per cent contain violence, which often includes acts committed against women.

The AAP concluded that sexist and violent portrayals in music videos could "distort adolescents' expectations about conflict resolution, race and male-female relationships."

Parents should encourage older kids to analyze the dominant messages in music videos by asking these questions:

What lifestyle choices are promoted in these videos, in terms of tobacco and alcohol use, or sexual activity?

Is the video an effective marketing tool for the artist?

What trends in popular culture have been inspired by these videos?

(Source: *Popular Music & Music Videos* teaching lesson)

## **Negative Effects of Music**

For kids with a healthy self-image and varied interests, music probably has little or no influence on their values and lifestyle choices. However, parents should be aware that violent, racist, homophobic or sexist lyrics in much of today's popular music could have an impact on impressionable young people who are just developing a sense of identity and self-worth. Parents should challenge these kinds of negative representations and discuss them with their kids.

Music preferences can be a warning sign of a distressed teen. Isolated, angry or depressed youth may be attracted to music that feeds their feelings of despair and hostility.

Numerous studies indicate that a preference for heavy metal music may be a significant marker for alienation, substance abuse, psychiatric disorders, suicide risk, sex-role stereotyping or risk-taking behaviors during adolescence. (Source: American Academy of Pediatrics, 1999)

If your child is withdrawn and alienated from peers, or shows violent tendencies towards self or others, pay attention to what music is being listened to. Use the *Checklist for Violent Youth* (on the right-hand side of this page) for identifying signs of potential violence. Make sure the child's mental health needs are being addressed through appropriate school, medical or social-service counseling.

## **The Social Impact of Music Violence**

Testimony of the American Academy of Pediatrics before the Senate Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, Restructuring, and The District of Columbia

Presented by –Frank Palumbo, M.D., FAAP

November 6, 1997

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the social impact of music violence. My name is Dr. Frank Palumbo and I am a practicing pediatrician here in Washington D.C. I am testifying on behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), an organization of 55,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults.

Pediatricians' concern about the impact of music lyrics and music videos on children and youth compelled the AAP Committee on Communications to issue a policy statement on the subject in December 1989, as well as one on media violence in 1995. Policy statements are the official position of the Academy concerning health care issues, and help guide pediatricians in their assessment and treatment of patients.

Pediatricians with a specialty in adolescent medicine are keenly aware of how crucial music is to a teen's identity and how it helps them define important social and subcultural boundaries. One study found that teens listened to music an average of 40 hours per week.

During the past four decades, rock music lyrics have become increasingly explicit -- particularly with reference to drugs, sex, violence and even of greater concern, sexual violence. Heavy metal and rap lyrics have elicited the greatest concern, as they compound the environment in which some adolescents increasingly are confronted with pregnancy, drug use, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome and other sexually transmitted diseases, injuries, homicide and suicide.

For example, Nine Inch Nails released "Big Man with a Gun," with the following lyrics: I am a big man (yes I am) and I have a big gun; got me a big old dick and I like to have fun; held against your forehead, I'll make you suck it, maybe I'll put a hole in your head; you know, just for the f-k of it...I'm every inch a man, and I'll show you somehow; me and my f-king gun; nothing can stop me now; shoot shoot shoot shoot shoot...

Marilyn Manson has quite the way with a lyric: "Who said date rape isn't kind," "The housewife I will beat" and "I slit my teenage wrist" are just a sample from two songs.

To date, no studies have documented a cause-and-effect relationship between sexually explicit or violent lyrics and adverse behavioral effects, i.e., I'll listen to a song about killing someone and therefore I go out and kill. But we can all acknowledge the overall effect music has on people, including adolescents and children. Otherwise, we wouldn't listen to it. Music wakes us up in the morning, makes us want to dance, soothes us when we're feeling sad and grates on some folks' nerves in the elevator. From infancy to adulthood, it is an integral part of our lives. Mothers sing lullabies to babies, toddlers and children play "ring around the rosie," and teenagers become absorbed in songs they believe help better define them during this rocky transition into adulthood.

Make no mistake about it, music can summon a range of emotions, most of which are wonderful. Yet there is some music that communicates potentially harmful health messages, especially when it reaches a vulnerable audience.

If parents in the 50s didn't like Elvis' gyrating hips, those same people would be astounded at how rapidly we've reached the "anything goes" mentality of the 90s. With the advent of MTV and VH-1, not only do we have to listen to violent lyrics that for example degrade women, but we also get to see it acted out in full color. A handful of experimental studies indicate that music videos may have a significant behavioral impact by desensitizing violence and by making teenagers more likely to approve of premarital sex. According to a U.S. Department of Education report, a large percentage of young women and girls have been "subjected to a pattern of overt sexual hostility accompanied by actual or threatened physical contact and the repeated use of obscene or foul language."

An article in the May 1997 issue of the Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine documented televised music videos with multiple episodes of violence or weapon carrying. Rock's Guns-N-Roses and Beastie Boys each reached 36 violent episodes in performing just one song.

A wide majority of adults surveyed in a 1997 report from Public Agenda, “Kids These Days: What Americans Really Think about the Next Generation,” decried sex and violence in the media as threatening to the well-being of young people. The report, however, couches this as a problem without a solution. “Given the intense complaints about the media, it is somewhat surprising that only half of those surveyed (49%) think pressuring the entertainment industry to produce movies and music with less violence and sex will be a very effective way to help kids. Perhaps people doubt that the industry will be responsive to public pressure, or wonder just how much influence they as individuals can bring to bear,” it states.

We believe something can and should be done. Poll after poll laments the belief that our country, including its youth, is losing its moral center. Responsibility, respect and discipline are thought to be a thing of the past. Crime and violence have escalated to the point where it is a public health problem. Although there is no one solution, awareness of, and sensitivity to, the potential impact of music lyrics and videos by consumers, the media and the music industry is one important piece of the puzzle. It is in the children’s best interest to listen to lyrics or to watch videos that are not violent, sexist, drug-oriented, or antisocial.

The Academy strongly opposes censorship. As a society, however, we have to acknowledge the responsibility parents, the music industry and others have in helping to foster the nation’s children.

Although the evidence is incomplete, based on our knowledge of child and adolescent development, the AAP believes that parents should be aware of pediatricians’ concerns about the possible negative impact of music lyrics and videos. The Academy recommends that:

Research should be developed concerning the impact music lyrics and videos have on the behavior of adolescents and preadolescents.

The music video industry should be encouraged to produce videos and public service messages with positive themes about relationships, racial harmony, drug avoidance, nonviolence and conflict resolution, sexual abstinence, pregnancy prevention, and avoidance of sexually transmitted diseases.

Music video producers should be encouraged to exercise sensitivity and self-restraint in what they depict, as should networks in what they choose to air.

The music industry should develop and apply a system of specific content-labeling of music regarding violence, sex, drugs, or offensive lyrics. For those concerned about the “forbidden fruit” syndrome, only one study has examined the impact of parental advisory labels, and it found that teens were not more likely to be attracted simply because of the labeling. We label the food we eat, and the movies we watch -- why not label the music? If labeling is not done voluntarily by the music industry, then regulation should be developed to make it mandatory.

Performers should be encouraged to serve as positive role models for children and teenagers.

Pediatricians should join with educators and parents in local and national coalitions to discuss the effects of music lyrics on children and adolescents. The possible negative impact of sexually explicit, drug-oriented, or violent lyrics on compact discs, tapes, music videos and the Internet should be brought to light in the context of any possible behavioral effects.

Parents should take an active role in monitoring music that their children are exposed to and which they can purchase, as well as the videos they watch. Ultimately, it is the parent's responsibility to monitor what their children listen to and view. Pediatricians should encourage parents to do so.

Pediatricians should counsel parents to become educated about the media. This means watching television with their children and teenagers, discussing content with them, and initiating the process of selective viewing at an early age. In order to help this process, the Academy has launched Media Matters, a national media education campaign targeted to physicians, parents and youth. The primary goal of the Media Matters campaign is to help parents and children understand and impact upon the sometimes negative effects of images and messages in the media, including music lyrics and videos.

Media education includes developing critical thinking and viewing skills, and offering creative alternatives to media consumption. The Academy is particularly concerned about mass media images and messages, and the resulting impact on the health of vulnerable young people, in areas including violence, safety, sexuality, use of alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs, nutrition, and self-concept and identity.

For example, if a music video shows violence against women to any degree, a viewer, including young girls, could be led to believe such action is acceptable. If they are educated about the media, the premise in the video would be questioned and hopefully rejected.

Again, let me reiterate the point about a collective solution. Parents, pediatricians, the music industry and others have critical roles in discussing and addressing the increasing amount of violence in society, particularly when it comes to children and adolescents. It is my sincere hope that this hearing will begin a dialogue with all interested parties.

Thank you for your time today, and I am willing to answer any questions you may have.

The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 55,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children adolescents and young adults.

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## **The Real Rap against Rap**

by Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez

The Globe and Mail, May 1999

Let's state the obvious first, only because it's so obvious I'm amazed no one has noticed it. When the Columbia Journalism Review recently wrote an excellent piece criticizing the way print media have bungled the very real threat of Eminem to women and gays (because the aging boomer critics are afraid to look old), the writer nonetheless referred to Eminem as a "crossover" artist. Crossover. Huh.

It's funny. Article after article about this most vilified and most lauded pasty-faced pimply "rapper of the year" have made the same error, referring to Eminem as a "white rapper" too many times to list here. A crossover artist. Crossing over from what?

While we should all pay attention to the vile lyrics of Eminem's work, we should also pay close attention to the equally vile way the media have focused so much on this one offensive rapper out of hundreds, constantly reminding the public of his whiteness. See, in the modern press, which ostensibly seeks to be diverse and multicultural in its coverage of people and society, the only time people are ever described as "white" is when they have committed a hate crime.

Eminem is no exception. The rest of the time, it is only the rest of the population, all of those deemed to be "others" -- which is to say, outsiders -- who are described by skin colour. Don't believe me? Examine your newspapers.

In the case of Eminem, I would argue he has been noticed and crucified in the press only because he is white, and, according to the prejudices of the dominant class, is perceived by writers and editors to be acting outside of the range of acceptability for his type. When darker-skinned men rap endlessly of raping women, killing gays and shooting each other, no one in our commercial media seems to be bothered. After all, the media seem to say through their silence, we all know darkies are savages.

Tell this to the men (and they are almost always men) who produce the pieces crucifying Eminem, and they will look tremendously uncomfortable. I know. Until recently, I worked for such people, and I have been interviewed by them on MTV and NBC. More than once, I have been told that Eminem is worse than his black and brown counterparts because he is more violent and more dangerous than other rappers. I have also been told Eminem is more dangerous because he is more popular. None of this is true.

What is true is that a frightening double standard is applied by our media to rappers of varying skin tones. The lighter your skin, the more shocking your lyrics are seen to be. The darker your skin, the more "expected" your bad behaviour.

This, my friends, is called racism and stereotyping, and it, too, is a form of violence -- as objectionable as Eminem's lyrics. But who is going to criticize the critics?

Who is going to stand up and say the media are just as hideous as Eminem? I am. My question to my peers in the media is this: Why aren't you protesting violent, woman-hating, gay-bashing lyrics of darker-skinned men? Answer honestly, then tell me you're better than Eminem.

Nelly is a dark-skinned rapper from St. Louis who has sold more than four million copies of his debut album, *Country Grammar*, in the United States. The album held the No. 1 spot on Billboard's Hot 100 for eight consecutive weeks, making it one of the top-selling albums of the year. His catchy, bluesy sing-song rap songs blast from SUVs in every suburb in the land. But the major networks and newspapers are not concerned that he makes disparaging reference to "dykes," talks about forcing himself on women, and says things like, "Pull this trigger shit off the window/thru the head of your son."

And imagine if a white rapper such as Eminem were to chant the words spewed out by popular black rapper Jay-Z, whose songs regularly grace pop radio and MTV: "All Black in the club/the outcome ain't good/them niggaz act like wolves, how come?" Jay-Z also talks of roughing up priests and nuns, dealing drugs and murdering people. Similarly, black rapper Ja Rule says, "Guns will pop, niggaz will drop." What if Eminem said that? Popular rapper DMX speaks of having to murder his best friend after the friend betrays him. Shyne raps of violent rape and murder.

I repeat my question: Why aren't the media noticing? These are not obscure artists, with minor hits. These are multi-platinum pop stars who happen to have dark skin. This is mainstream. The reason the media ignores their sickening lyrics is simple. White reporters are often afraid to seem racist by criticizing what they ignorantly think is a foreign culture. Dark-skinned reporters, such as Frank Williams, the editor of the hip-hop publication *Source*, too often make themselves over in the stereotypes the dominant class has of them. They embrace offensive material as "keeping it real," without ever realizing it's musical blackface. Too few women are critics at all, and the few women "of colour" in our news organizations know all too well they have long had to choose between their concerns as women and their "loyalty" to "men of colour."

The saddest part of all of this, of course, is that a look at the history of the Americas will show that the very men who are assumed by the dominant class to be more violent by nature are, in fact, the ones who have suffered the most violence. And the men who are supposedly more civilized are the very ones who throughout history have committed genocide against indigenous Americans and enslaved Africans. When will the media acknowledge this history and rid itself of narrow and senseless stereotypes?

So here's a message to Canada: Go ahead and protest Eminem. I do. But don't do so hypocritically. If you truly believe all people are equal, and I do, and if you truly object to dehumanizing lyrics, then you will not accept the violent lyrics of one shade of people and object to the violent lyrics of another. Until the media give equal scrutiny to the hateful works of dark-skinned rappers, all their bellowing about Eminem will be nothing but hypocritical hot air.

Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez is an award-winning journalist, essayist and musician based in Los Angeles.

## Rocking My Life Away

Why I won't vote for Eminem

As everybody knows by now, Eminem's *The Marshall Mathers LP* has been nominated for Album of the Year by the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS), the organization that oversees the Grammy Awards. In many ways, it indisputably is the "Album of the Year" for 2000, if you take that category to be something like Time's "Person of the Year" Award -- that is, an acknowledgment of significance, not an expression of approval. *The Marshall Mathers LP* has sold well over eight million copies, and no artist -- hip-hop or otherwise -- is making music as fresh and exciting. Eminem has galvanized his young audience, crossed racial boundaries in groundbreaking ways and displayed a charismatic star power all too absent from the music scene in recent years. I'm not hesitant to say that I'm a fan.

But I'm also a member of NARAS, and I'm not going to vote for him. It's not a decision I made easily. But I've finally decided that awarding *The Marshall Mathers LP* the Album of the Year Grammy would sanction the gay-bashing and misogyny that is so deeply at the heart of that record, and I can't be part of that.

Like so many music writers, I've twisted and turned for the past eight months in my efforts to come to terms with *The Marshall Mathers LP*. On a purely aesthetic level, I loved the album from the minute it came out, and listened to it over and over. While I wasn't one of the voters who nominated it for a Grammy, I did put it on every one of my year-end lists of best albums. But I also wrote a long piece for *Rolling Stone* reporting on the controversy the album's lyrics were generating and their potential effect, particularly on gay adolescents.

I got Eminem to do a phone interview with me as I was writing that piece, and when I told him what the article was about, the first thing he said was, "This is about the lyrical content? It's not about the lyrics? I mean, it's not about, like, the talent or nothing, it's just about how f---d-up the lyrics are?"

When I heard the exasperation and -- though I'm sure he would never admit it -- the hurt in his voice, I felt like a traitor. I'm far more comfortable defending the right of artists to say whatever they like, and I'm well aware of the shameful degree to which hip-hop artists get targeted whenever the political and cultural whip comes down. And I should say right now that I absolutely disagree with any effort to ban or censor what Eminem or any other artist wants to sing or rap about.

But that freedom does not entitle Eminem to a Grammy in the Album of the Year category. That is one of the four most important Grammy Awards, and it is probably the most prestigious. Like the Oscars, the Grammys have a significance that the dozens of other Awards shows that have sprung up in recent years do not. The Grammys have made many ridiculous blunders in the course of their long history, but more than a billion people worldwide watch that show, and its

impact is enormous.

Moreover, like the Oscars, the Grammys are an industry award. They're not voted on by fans, but by people who are actively involved in making records. To be honest, when I won my Grammy in the Best Album Notes category for the Eric Clapton compilation *Crossroads*, I had no idea how far-reaching the importance of a Grammy is. People both inside and outside the industry respect those Awards. For Eminem to walk out onto that stage to claim the Album of the Year prize would tell the world that the music business is perfectly comfortable with the gratuitous victimization of gays and women. That is not an acceptable message to send.

Ironically, Eminem addresses the issue of winning a Grammy on *The Marshall Mathers LP* itself. "You think I give a damn about a Grammy?" he asks on "The Real Slim Shady." "Half you critics can't stomach me, let alone stand me." On the album it's funny, but the issues with Eminem are not personal -- and it's not just critics (many of whom are among his staunchest supporters, by the way) who are voting.

Eminem has had many opportunities to apologize for -- or, at least, explain more sympathetically -- the views he puts forward on his album. Instead, he's chosen to stonewall the discussion, offering explanations -- like when he uses the term "faggot" he's not referring to gay people -- that don't explain anything. It's hard for hip-hop artists to back down under any circumstances, but that's finally no excuse.

The Marshall Mathers LP has incited a serious, responsible debate, and to that extent we should be grateful. And, as anyone who remembers the sexual harassment at the Woodstock concert in the summer of 1999 can attest, Eminem is hardly the only contemporary artist whose values can be called into question. But he's the one who's up for Album of the Year, and that's an honor that The Marshall Mathers LP does not deserve to receive.

ANTHONY DECURTIS

(January 27, 2001)

## **Rock & Roll: Does it influence teens' behavior?**

BY KATHLEEN O'TOOLE

Parents of adolescents who can't tell heavy metal from pop rock may have a tough time discussing the meaning of life with their children, say two professors of communication in a new book on youth and music. That's because music is central to youth culture. At an adolescent party, the key question is not what you do but what music you listen to.

It's Not Only Rock & Roll is scheduled to be published in early December by Hampton Press of Cresskill, N.J. The authors, Professor Donald Roberts of Stanford and Professor Peter Christenson of Lewis and Clark College, a former graduate student of Roberts', spent three years organizing the available research into a coherent overview for those concerned about the influences of pop music and about efforts to censor it. Roberts also summarized the research

before a Senate subcommittee on Nov. 6. The book offers some comfort to parents and others who are worried about graphic sex, morbid violence, overt racism and challenges to authority in popular music lyrics and videos. Music doesn't appear to have massive negative effects, the authors say. But it does seem to be dangerous for some youth, and to ignore its effects on a subset of young people "makes no more sense than to ignore the causes of homicide because only a tiny minority ever commits murder."

Entertainment executives and teenagers who argue that pop music is "just music" do not take into account that "most human learning is incidental in nature and takes place outside of designated educational settings," the authors write. Poetry is "equipment for living," the late philosopher Kenneth Burke once wrote. Christenson and Roberts emphasize that in the adolescent years, pop music is the "heavy equipment" – more influential than television, movies and computers.

## **How youth use music**

On average, American youth listen to music and watch music videos four to five hours a day, which is more time than they spend with their friends outside of school or watching television. "Music matters to adolescents, and they cannot be understood without a serious consideration of how it fits into their lives," the authors say.

"Music alters and intensifies their moods, furnishes much of their slang, dominates their conversations and provides the ambiance at their social gatherings. Music styles define the crowds and cliques they run in. Music personalities provide models for how they act and dress."

Music also appears to alter study habits and damage eardrums.

"Such consequences may not spring as quickly to mind as sex and violence, but they may ultimately play just as crucial a role in adolescent development."

Many scholars have viewed television as the central media influence on adolescents, Christenson said, but adolescents devote more time and intensity to music.

They use music most to control mood and enhance emotional states. "Music can make a good mood better and allow us to escape or 'work through' a bad one," he said. But it can also be used to enhance bad moods, which has led some to believe music lyrics about suicide and violence against women have occasionally led troubled youth to commit suicide or violent crimes.

"In one study, a heavy metal devotee reported that he loved the music because it put him in a 'good mood,' by which he meant a mood conducive to smashing mailboxes with bricks," the authors report. "Another said hardcore metal put him in the mood to 'go beat the crap out of someone.' "

Movies and news reports tend to over-emphasize such extreme examples, Christenson said, but the evidence suggests that music is more likely to energize listeners than to de-energize or mellow them out.

Adolescents also use music to gain information about the adult world, to withdraw from social contact (such as using a Walkman as a barrier, not unlike an adult hiding behind a newspaper at the breakfast table), to facilitate friendships and social settings, or to help them create a personal identity.

## **Warning labels, MTV**

Some conventional wisdom takes a whipping in this book, but studies, which have been conducted mostly since the 1980s, also confirm many commonsense notions or casual observations about music and youth. The surprises to most people perhaps are these:

Labels warning of explicit lyrics on recordings prompt adolescents in general to like the music less. They see it as "tainted fruit," rather than as "forbidden fruit" they must try, Christenson found in the only study done of music labeling. Not everyone in the study reacted negatively to the labeled music, however. "An advisory sticker might well be a come-on for some kids who are alienated from their parents, their school or the mainstream peer culture," he said.

Music videos are a "powerful new force" in adolescent culture but they don't seem to hold adolescents' interest nearly as long as the music itself. It is the youngest adolescents who watch MTV and other music videos the most, but older adolescents devote more total time to music.

When kids tell their parents that the "sound" of music matters more to them than the lyrics, there is considerable evidence to support them. Averages, however, conceal ranges, and the more involved adolescents are with music, the more they listen to the lyrics. For many youth, however, "music is often a secondary, background activity rather than a primary, foreground one. It serves as a backdrop to other activities — reading, studying, talking, housework, driving," they wrote.

10-year-olds with music passions

Understanding pop music's role in adolescent culture also requires understanding adolescence better than many people do, the authors say. We tend to think of adolescence as the teenage years, but child development experts mark the beginning, on average, at about age 10, at least two years earlier than half a century ago, Roberts said. Because children's biological and social development rates are so variable, the authors suggest that perhaps the easiest way to tell if a particular child has reached adolescence is to notice whether he or she has developed a passion for popular music.

Parenting books, psychoanalysts and mass media all portray the adolescent stage of life as full of crisis, rebellion against adult authority and conflict, the authors say, but research doesn't support that stereotype. "For most kids, adolescence is a period of normal, gradual development in considerable harmony with parental values and cultural expectations." For about 10 percent of families, serious generational conflicts dominate and another 25 percent find the period less happy for their families than earlier years.

The meaning adolescents take away from music videos or lyrics is partly determined by their stage in life. People in general do not discover the meanings of lyrics so much as they construct them, drawing on knowledge they already have, the authors point out. This leads, of course, to hilarious "mondegreens," such as the one coined by a 5-year-old who loved Sunday school because he got to sing about "Gladly, the cross-eyed bear." Adolescents, who typically focus on one new adult issue at a time, are quite likely to take away varied messages from lyrics. Researchers have found, for example, that girls who view Madonna's video of "Papa Don't Preach" give vastly different interpretations of it. For one girl it is a song about true love; to another, it is about parent-child authority conflicts, and to third, it is about assuming adult roles.

In another study, adolescents interpreted both regular heavy metal and Christian heavy metal music as about sex and violence. It appears that the sound of heavy metal has a general reputation for sex and violence, Roberts said, and the youth listening to Christian rock didn't really hear the different message of the lyrics.

## **Violence a turn-off?**

Pop music has been very controversial at least since the 1950s, but even Plato complained about the influence of music on youth. Today, the controversy is greater, with statements about it even taking on prominence in the last presidential campaign. "When it comes to popular music, rabid conviction and lack of consensus go together like Siamese twins," Christenson and Roberts wrote.

The messages of music are not synonymous with its effects, they say, and they remind adults that most of them were served "at least a modicum of media violence and sex" in their youth. They also caution adults not to "lose sight of the sad reality that many kids may be monsters already and simply seek out musical fare that resonates with their monstrous inclinations."

They remind music industry apologists that it is disingenuous to argue that music can have no serious effects simply because it's "only entertainment," or to argue that art can be uplifting but not the reverse.

In several studies, researchers have found that music videos laced with violent images made youthful male viewers more antagonistic in their orientation toward women and more likely to condone violence in themselves and others. In another study of college students shown a set of videos with varying levels of sex and violence, the researchers found that "as violence went up, students said they felt less happy, more fearful and more anxious and aggressive." Yet another study of violence and sex in combination found no significant effect. More research is necessary, the authors say, to clarify the impact with any precision. "No doubt it depends on the type of sex or violence," they wrote.

## **Managing Music in the Home**

Listen to the music your children like. Read the lyrics and discuss them with your kids. But keep in mind that studies have shown that many kids don't pay a lot of attention to lyrics, so putting too much emphasis on the words of favorite songs may be counter-productive.

Broaden your kids' musical tastes by exposing them to different kinds of music: jazz, classical, folk, country, blues, show tunes, etc., through recordings and live concerts. Show them how the music they enjoy didn't develop in a void, but is a culmination of many different earlier musical influences.

If your kids like music videos, watch with them and use violent or sexist content as starting points for discussing gender stereotyping and media violence.

Talk about the role of gender stereotyping plays in the marketing of female artists. An examination of *Rolling Stone* covers will help illustrate how the industry continues to promote women artists as sex objects.

When your kids are young, you have the right to ban music you find inappropriate from your house. Talk to your kids about your decision and explain why you find the music objectionable. Even if they disagree, your kids will probably respect your decision if you explain your motivation.

Teens will object to censorship of their music, and they have the right to defend their viewpoint. Discuss freedom of expression versus censorship, and try to come up with a compromise that respects everyone's feelings.

When purchasing music for your kids, look for Parental Advisory labels that warn of explicit lyrics. Keep in mind that labelling is voluntary for recording companies, so you can't assume that music without a label will be appropriate for all ages.

If a CD or tape purchased by your child has objectionable lyrics and doesn't have an advisory label, return it to the store. Most stores have a "hassle-free" return policy if a parent disapproves of a child's purchase.

Ask music store staff for information about specific artists. Most music store employees are very willing to guide parents when they choose music for their kids.

Supervise your kids' access to music on the Internet. The music and lyrics for virtually any song can be freely downloaded from the Internet by anyone, regardless of age. In some cases there are even additional lyrics that have been censored in the retail version.

Canada's cable music station Much Music has strict guidelines regarding violent content, however the highly sexualized music videos of many artists make the station inappropriate viewing for children and even pre-teens. Parents should also be aware that music videos are not rated using the Canadian TV Classification System.

## **Rock & Roll: Does it influence teens' behavior?**

(Continuation of article)

Male- vs. female-appeal music

From conversations with their friends and acquaintances, Roberts and Christenson have concluded that most adults generally think of adolescent music as all the same. Most don't seem aware of the astonishing increase in music genres and subgenres since they were young. Billboard now reports on more than 20 music charts, and the annual Grammy awards recognize 80 music categories. Yet even the industry does not recognize as much fragmentation as youthful consumers when they are asked about their music preferences.

This diversity and selectivity are important, the authors say, because the "symbolic environment" of genres varies and adolescent preferences are linked to both individual and group identity. "A kid whose tastes run to rap artists such as Coolio or NWA probably thinks of himself in different terms and associates with a different peer group than one who prefers the pop sound of Mariah Carey or Janet Jackson."

American adolescents perceive a cluster of music grounded in the racial origin of performers, they say, and also combine into one group various music types of British origin, such as punk, new wave and reggae. They also recognize "classic" rock of the '60s and '70s as a category, heavy metal, American hard rock, Christian music (including Christian pop and black gospel), a combined jazz-blues grouping, and a cluster of music the researchers call "mainstream pop." College students and other older adolescents make more distinctions than younger ones.

Females and males differ substantially in how much they like various categories, with females showing more attraction to black music and more dislike for hard rock and especially heavy metal. The latter is not surprising, the researchers say, given the harsh view of women in heavy metal lyrics.

Males generally like mainstream pop less than females; males tend to think of the music as "unhip" or "uncool." The gender gap is so large in adolescent music tastes that one researcher has suggested the industry simply dump its elaborate pop music categories into "male appeal" or "female appeal." The gender gap holds for other ages also but perhaps is greater in adolescence because the development of cross-gender relationships is a new focus for that age group, the authors say.

More recent surveys suggest the race of performers is also important, particularly among males and among youth from lower-income homes. "The suburban white rap fan (just as the rare urban black hard rock fan) is making a conscious cultural choice and a strong personal statement."

Generally, though, differences in music taste are "not random or idiosyncratic but shaped by social background and other environmental influences." At the same time, the researchers say, it's important to remember that "popular music genres rarely express anything resembling a coherent world view" and the themes of songs are more varied than themes in other media.

For kids alienated from the school culture who wish to project an image of individualism and unconventionality, they say, just hearing a song on commercial radio or MTV can be a reason not to like it. "If the prom queen likes it, maybe it is time to move on to something that smacks a bit less of the mainstream," they wrote.

Age differences also exist and lead to what the researchers call the Madonna contradiction. "Despite Madonna's phenomenal commercial success throughout her career, few college freshmen will admit publicly to owning any of her music." A great many Madonna albums are skeletons in college students' bedroom closets at home, the researchers suspect.

The authors are particularly intrigued by rap music's crossover appeal, an anomaly. Rap is extremely popular with white youth and as popular with girls as boys, despite its misogynist and hypermasculine nature. Part of its appeal, the authors say, is for the body rather than the ear. Rap flourishes as dance music and girls are more interested in dancing. As "cultural tourists," suburban white girls may distance themselves from the real meaning of rap lyrics, while African American females who are often repelled by the lyrics still enjoy dancing.

The authors are troubled by one implication of white use of rap music. To the extent it is the primary source of information about African Americans and that music companies intentionally distort the urban African American experience, "the impact of crossover rap listening may be more to cultivate negative racial stereotypes than to advance cross-cultural understanding."

Less mainstream than rap is heavy metal, a category that also draws criticism from adult critics. Evidence suggests it appeals most to white males. The peer group has a stronger hold on heavy metal fans, and they have less respect for women than other adolescents.

"However, if there is a syndrome at work here, it is a 'troubled youth syndrome,' not a heavy metal syndrome," the researchers say. That is, adolescents who are troubled or at risk in various ways tend to gravitate to heavy metal, but most heavy metal fans are not on drugs, not in jail, failing school or depressed.

### **Music taste and school grades**

The relationship between academic success or failure and music taste may be very important, the authors say. Studies indicate early school achievement influences later music choices, not the other way around. Lower school commitment is generally associated with heavy metal, and in the view of at least one British researcher they cite, low-achievers embrace heavy metal as a "cultural solution" to their low standing in the traditional school pecking order. The music reinforces who one is and tells others what group he or she belongs to.

Given this connection, Christenson and Roberts urge adults to adopt a stance of "respectful disagreement" with the negative values they see in the music some adolescents favor. When teachers and administrators stigmatize peer groups based on music, "the wedge between these kids – who, after all, are often the ones who most need to be reached – and the mainstream school culture is driven even deeper."

They finish their book with comments on these 1974 lyrics by the Rolling Stones: "I know it's only rock and roll, but I like it."

"The Stones knew this was a lie even as they sang it," Roberts and Christenson say. "Then as now, it wasn't only rock and roll, and kids didn't just like it, they *loved* it." SR

## **Teen-Oriented Radio and CD**

Sexual Content Analysis

Report prepared by:

Douglas A. Gentile, Ph.D.

July 15, 1999

The sexual content of teen-oriented radio programming and top-selling compact discs was measured. Overall, 22 percent of radio segments contained sexual content, and 20 percent of these were "pretty explicit" or "very explicit." When there is sexual content on the radio, it tends to be during music segments (44% include sexual content) or during talk segments (30%). Almost half (44%) of sexual messages during talk segments referred to sex outside of pre-existing relationships, whereas fewer than one in ten (6%) messages referred to sex within a pre-existing relationship.

Each of the top 10 CDs includes at least one song with sexual content. Forty-two percent of the songs on these CDs contain sexual content, and 41 percent of these are "pretty explicit" or "very explicit." There were large differences in the amount and degree of sexual content among the CDs. Five of the top 10 CDs included the warning: "Parental Advisory: Explicit Content."

For both the CDs and the radio programming, very few songs or segments included messages about sexual planning/responsibility, the consequences or risks of sexual behavior, the benefits of sexual patience, or fidelity.

### **Purpose**

To provide information about the sexual content of (1) teen-oriented radio programming in the Minneapolis-St. Paul market, and (2) top-selling music compact discs (CDs).

### **Overview of Method**

**Selection of Radio Programming.** One radio station in Minneapolis dominates the teen market--KDWB (101.3 FM). This station controls approximately 47 percent of the teen (ages 12 - 17) market share. The station with the second largest percentage of market share (KXPT, 104.1 FM) only controls approximately 10 percent of the teen market share, and the rest of the teen share is distributed among numerous other stations. Because KDWB is the dominant teen station, we chose to sample programming only from KDWB.

KDWB has the highest weekday ratings among the teen market during the 6 to 10 a.m. and 3 to 7 p.m. time slots.<sup>1</sup> These correspond roughly to the Dave Ryan morning show and the Tone E. Fly afternoon show. Thus, we chose to sample two hours of programming (from 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. and from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m.) each day for one week. KARE-11 ordered one week's worth of programming during these times from a private source. We received tapes from the week of February 8 through February 12, 1999. Although KARE-11 specifically requested a week when both Dave Ryan and Tone E. Fly were on the air, the tapes from this week only included the scheduled Dave Ryan show. The afternoon show was entirely music programming (there are normally talk segments interspersed with the music). Therefore, our sample included a week of the Dave Ryan morning show and a week of afternoon music programming. We subsequently taped one hour of afternoon programming during the week of April 19 through April 23, 1999. The normal host was present during this week.

### **Selection of CDs**

KARE-11 received a list of the top 200 albums (measured by retail sales) for the week ending February 7, 1999. This information would have been used to help select the music to be aired on the radio for the week of February 8. We chose to analyze the top 10 CDs from this list. The CDs are:

1. Britney Spears, Baby One More Time
2. Lauryn Hill, The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill
3. Offspring, Americana
4. Foxy Brown, Chyna Doll
5. N Sync, N Sync
6. Dixie Chicks, Wide Open Spaces
7. Silkk the Shocker, Made Man
8. 2Pac, Greatest Hits
9. DMX, Flesh of My Flesh, Blood of My Blood
10. Everlast, Whitey Ford Sings the Blues

### **Coding for Sexual Content**

Three trained media raters conducted the content analysis. All three raters were female. They participated in five hours of training to learn to use the coding. The raters coded independently of each other. Every CD and radio program was coded by two raters. Average agreement among the raters was 91%. Conflicts were resolved by having two raters re-listen to the segment in question and reach agreement together about the segment.

In contrast to market share, which is the percentage of the listening audience that is listening to a specific station, ratings are a percentage of the population of teens (listening or not) tuned into a specific station.

Two types of sexual content were rated: (1) sexual innuendo or seductive talk/lyrics, and (2) direct discussion or description of sexual intercourse. These categories are based on similar categories used in sexual content analyses of television programs (Heintz-Knowles, 1996). These categories are used to capture specifically sexual dialogue or lyrics, in contrast

to romantic dialogue or lyrics.

We measured a number of content areas, including whether there was any mention of (1) planning or sexual responsibilities, such as condoms or birth control methods, (2) consequences or risks of sexual behavior, such as pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases, (3) the benefits of sexual patience or abstinence, (4) fidelity or monogamy, or whether there were (5) sexual or suggestive sound effects.

The relationship context of every segment including sexual content was coded to determine whether the discussion of the potential or actual sexual encounter was (1) within a pre-existing relationship, (2) outside a pre-existing relationship or prior to a relationship, or (3) undeterminable from the information given.

Finally, each segment including sexual content was coded on a four-point Likert scale for amount of explicitness. The four points were verbally anchored as follows: not at all explicit, a little explicit, pretty explicit, and very explicit.

#### **Examples of Sexual Content Ratings:**

1. “Oh baby, baby / The reason I breathe is you / Boy you got me blinded / Oh pretty baby / There’s nothing that I wouldn’t do / It’s not the way I planned it / Show me how you want it to be” (Britney Spears, Baby One More Time). This is coded as containing no sexual content.

2. “And get this, a Drew Carey love triangle. Three guys, one girl, hey, use your imagination.... So, if you’re looking for a better way to spend time with your valentine, stay home for valentine’s the ABC way -- a twosome, a threesome, and a free-for-all!” (ABC “Valentine Wednesday” commercial, 2/10/99). This is coded as sexual innuendo, “not at all explicit.”

3. “I won’t even tell you the kind of stuff that I did when I was a teenager, ‘cuz I, I’m just embarrassed about what we used to do to entertain ourselves with farm animals on weekends.” (Dave Ryan, 2/11/99). Coded as sexual innuendo, “a little explicit.”

4. “...It was so dumb / should’a used a condom...Let him do his thing / I’m the one he’s loving / I’m here to show y’all / having the kid ain’t meaning nothing / That ain’t keeping him / especially if he in love with another chick / then you’re stuck with the baby mother shit” (Foxy Brown, My Life). Coded as sexual innuendo, “pretty explicit,” including discussion of responsibilities and consequences.

5. “It’s been three weeks since you’ve been looking for your friend / The one you let hit it and never called you again... You act like you ain’t hear him then gave him a little trim...Plus when you give it up so easy you ain’t even fooling him / If you did it then, then you probably fuck again...The quick to shoot the semen stop acting like boys and be men...” (Lauryn Hill, Doo Wop (That Thing)). Coded as direct

discussion of sexual intercourse, “very explicit,” including discussion of planning, the benefits of sexual patience, and fidelity.

6. “Give me some room / Oh y’all just want to dig in my womb / You don’t even know me / Want to fuck my friends?...Leave you numb / Make me come / Five more times, need five more bottles to get my shit wet / You ain’t even sucked the tits yet...Fuck you right” (Foxy Brown, Tramp). Coded as direct discussion of sexual intercourse, “very explicit,” outside of a pre-existing relationship.

## **Summary of Results**

### Compact Discs. Overall Results

Each of the 10 CDs included at least one song with sexual content. There were a total of 159 songs on the top 10 CDs. Of the 159 songs, 42 percent contained sexual content.

We measured the relationship context of the sexual content. Of the 66 songs that include sexual content, over two-thirds (68%) do not make it clear whether the sexual encounter is between people who are in a pre-existing relationship or are outside of a preexisting relationship. Fourteen percent of the songs with sexual content are about sexual activities occurring between people who are not in a pre-existing relationship.

We measured a number of content “messages” contained in the songs, including whether the songs included each of the following:

- Any mention of planning or sexual responsibilities
- Any mention of the consequences or risks of sexual behavior
- Any mention of the benefits of sexual patience or abstinence
- Any mention of fidelity or monogamy
- Sexual sound effects

As shown in Table 11, very few songs included any of these messages. However, 18 percent of songs including sexual content also included sexual sound effects.

### **Table 11**

Planning or Responsibilities 6%  
Consequences or Risks 8%  
Benefits of Sexual Patience or Abstinence 5%  
Fidelity or Monogamy 6%  
Sexual Sound Effects 18%

### **Individual CD Results**

Five of the top 10 CDs have the warning label “Parental Advisory: Explicit Content” on their covers. These five are:

- Foxy Brown, Chyna Doll
- Silkk the Shocker, Made Man

-2Pac, Greatest Hits

-DMX, Flesh of My Flesh, Blood of My Blood

-Everlast, Whitey Ford Sings the Blues

Four of these five were rated as having songs that include "Very Explicit" or "Pretty Explicit" sexual content. Only Everlast, Whitey Ford Sings the Blues, was not rated as such. There was also one CD, Lauryn Hill, which had one song rated as "Very Explicit," although the CD carried no parental warning.

## **References**

Heintz-Knowles, K. E. (1996). Sexual activity on daytime soap operas: A content analysis of five weeks of television programming. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation.

## **Music Videos Promote Adolescent Aggression**

By William J. Cromie  
Gazette Staff

### **Music videos may be hazardous to your health.**

The largest sampling of music video content to date reveals a disturbing amount of violence, as well as unrealistic views of racial and sexual relationships, according to researchers at the Harvard Medical School.

"We did the first detailed analysis of interpersonal violence in the context of the powerful and well-documented association between media violence and real-life aggression," says Michael Rich, a pediatrician and former filmmaker. "Our findings raise concern for the effect of violent portrayals in music videos on adolescents' expectations about their own safety and the way they view people of another gender or race. Their approaches to interracial interactions and male-female relationships, and their strategies for conflict resolution are vulnerable to the effects of these portrayals."

Violence by teenagers, and even preteens, exploded into public consciousness recently as a result of shootings in Jonesboro, Ark., Paducah, Ky., and Pearl, Miss. As shocking as they are, such high-visibility incidents are just the tip of an iceberg that includes the murders of about 3,500 youths between 15 and 19 years old every year. More than 150,000 arrests of adolescents for violent crimes occur each year. Hundreds of studies have linked exposure to media violence to violent real-life behavior in adolescents.

### **A Dangerous World**

Rich and his colleagues at Harvard-affiliated Children's Hospital in Boston recorded afternoon and weekend broadcasts from the four most popular music video networks: Black Entertainment Television, Country Music Television, Music Television (MTV), and Video Hits-1. They then trained college students, aged 17 to 24 years, to analyze the videos for violence content.

Out of 518 videos examined, 76 (15 percent) showed acts of interpersonal violence. That percentage was surprising; estimates by others have ranged as high as 57 percent. But the number of videos containing interpersonal violence was not reassuring because of the amount and nature of the aggression.

Violent videos showed a mean of six acts of violence per 2-3-minute-long segment -- a total of 462 shootings, stabbing, punching, and kicking in the 76 videos.

Males and females were victimized equally, "raising the perception that the world is a mean and dangerous place and that nobody is safe," Rich says. "That perception motivates people to protect themselves by carrying weapons, and to use those weapons to get others 'before they get me.' "

Males, often the stars of these videos, were more than three times as likely as females to be aggressors. That's bad, considering that adolescents often model themselves after popular music video stars, particularly physically attractive ones.

According to the study, reported in this month's *Pediatrics*, the journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, blacks were shown as aggressors in 25 percent of the incidents. They were victims in 41 percent of music video violence.

"Admittedly, a large amount of violence *is* committed by black males on black males," comments Rich, "but such numbers are an exaggeration given that blacks represent only 12 percent of the U.S. population."

White women comprised the largest group of music video victims. This finding indicates to the researchers that the videos may be perpetuating and reinforcing false stereotypes of aggressive black males and easily victimized white women.

"Multiple laboratory and field experiments have demonstrated that exposure to sexual violence in music videos and other media desensitizes male viewers to violence against women and heightens a sense of disempowerment among female viewers," notes the report. "These effects may have profound implications for the nature of adolescent male-female relationships and for both gender expectations and for conduct of those relationships."

### **Suspending Reality**

Surveys conclude that music videos are watched by a majority of teenagers. Take the MTV network, for example. "Designed for and aimed at teenagers between 12 and 19 years old, MTV is watched by 73 percent of boys and 78 percent of girls in this age group for an average of 6.6 and 6.2 hours each week," the report states.

"The combination of music and images is more potent than either alone," Rich points out. "Music lulls and disinhibits, making it easy to suspend reality. The barrage of brief scenes allows images of violence and sex to be mixed in far more insidious ways than in a narrative drama," such as the "soaps" or sitcoms.

Rich, who spent 12 years as a film maker before going to the Medical School, insists it is the nature of music video violence, not violence per se, that leads to problems. "Violence is a fact of life and a staple of drama," he says. "What changes its quality is how it is presented and resolved."

Rich cites Japan as an example. Despite similar levels of media violence as the United States, Japan enjoys a far lower level of real-life violence. Rich and his colleagues explain this by noting that in Japan violence is perpetrated by bad guys and is punished, while in the United States it is done by heroes and is justified and celebrated. The Japanese show the suffering and loss that follows violent acts; Americans do not.

"The more realistic Japanese picture of violence as hurtful behavior with significant negative outcomes for aggressors and victims is less likely to produce imitators among its viewers than the repercussion-free violence typical of American entertainment," the researchers write.

"Our society has come to view violence as titillation; each violent movie or video strives to outdo what came before it," adds Rich. "No one seems aware of the consequences for young minds that are trying to learn how to get along in the world."

Rich draws the example of a teenager who is disliked and picked on by schoolmates. The boy sees a film where an ostracized hero gets revenge by killing or harming his tormentors and the adolescent immediately identifies with the violent actor.

"Young minds aren't always capable of separating fiction and reality," Rich comments. "They may see violence as an easy way to settle conflict or relieve stress. The media doesn't show the consequences, and they don't think about them."

### **What To Do?**

Rich, who is also an instructor in public health practice at the Harvard School of Public Health, has some ideas about how to break, or at least weaken, the link between media and real-life aggression. National censure or prohibition is not an approach he favors. "Such legislation doesn't work in a free society," he says. Nor does he favor technological solutions, such as the V chip, because he believes kids will find ways around them.

Rich prefers what he calls "inoculation." "Just as antibiotics may control an infection, there are 'antibiotics' we can administer for media violence," he notes.

Rich believes this inoculation can be done by giving the other side of the story. Before a violent video or film, visuals could be added to show how the upcoming violence is faked, a strategy to divorce fantasy from reality. The pain, suffering, and other consequences of violent actions could be portrayed with as much potency as violence.

"One group in California has started to do this, and preliminary results are promising," Rich says.

"We can scream our heads off about how dangerous this stuff is, and it will fall on deaf ears,"

Rich continues. "Things will only start to happen when Nielsen ratings drop and kids don't see the commercials on these programs. Dollars are the only thing that the entertainment industry listens to. We *do* have a choice between showing thoughtless violence and entertainment that moves us and guides us to think about how our lives and those of our children can be safer and better.

"We have to move from just saying the infection of violence is terrible to developing the antibiotics that will cure it."

## **Warning labels don't keep kids from shock CDs - pop music**

Insight on the News,  
Jan 12, 1998 by Julia Duin

Parental-advisory labels on compact discs and audiotapes are effective only if parents monitor their children's purchases, say store owners who sell to minors.

When Chad Anthony Sisk, a 15-year-old high-school student from Philadelphia, showed up at a congressional hearing recently, he brought with him an assortment of X-rated material.

The material included three compact discs: *Il Na Na* by Foxy Brown Hardcore by Lil' Kim; and *Life After Death* by the late Notorious B.I.G., also known as Biggie Smalls or Christopher Wallace. Although all of these albums came with black-and-white parental-advisory stickers denoting obscene language or explicit sexual content, the stickers are useless, Chad told a Senate subcommittee.

"At first, I didn't pay attention to the parental-guidance signs on them because I could still buy them," he said. "Only once at Tower Records did they say, 'Are you over 18? Do you know you can't buy this without your parents here?'"

If there's a problem buying albums in the store, children always can "join the mail-order records club and get 11 for a penny," Chad continued. Mail-order catalogs may ask one's age on the order form but still process the order. "They warn you there's cursing on it, that's all."

The parental-advisory labels on compact discs and tapes are effective only if parents monitor their children's purchases. "It's supposed to be a tool to just help parents who are accompanying their kids," says Sarah Pitts, store manager at the Serenade Record Shop in Washington. "We don't really think of it as our responsibility or our duty, let us say."

Invented in 1990 by the Recording Industry Association of America, the label consists of four words: "Parental Advisory/Explicit Content." But parents and music-industry officials often are clueless about the nature of the music carrying such labels.

"These malicious lyrics grossly malign black women, degrade the unthinking young black artists

who create it, pander pornography to our innocent young children, hold black people -- especially young black males -- universally up to ridicule and contempt and corrupt its vast audience of listeners, white and black, throughout the world," says C. Delores Tucker, president of the National Political Congress of Black Women, about "gangsta rap" genre.

During the congressional hearing a North Dakota man testified that his 15-year-old son killed himself after listening to a CD by shock-rocker Marilyn Manson. Such stories prompted Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman, Connecticut Democrat, to challenge the judgment of record companies. "I think you just have to acknowledge music has consequences," he said.

It also has cash value. The domestic record market does \$12.5 billion worth of business, mostly through six distributors: WEA Inc., also known as Warner Music Group; Polygram (Dutch); EMI Music Distribution; BMG Distribution (German), Sony Music (Japanese); and Universal Music and Video.

Tucker has targeted Manson's label, Interscope, a company now owned by Seagrams Co., the Montreal-based liquor and entertainment giant, and she is fighting three lawsuits from record companies claiming she has interfered with their business. But Tucker and her husband, William, have been undeterred, buying 15 shares of stock in Seagrams in order to protest at the company's stockholders meeting in November.

"I would hate to think that the need for corporate profits are so desperate that corporate principles and societal responsibility are sacrificed on the altar of expediency," says William Tucker. "If this were the case, one could easily justify buying 50 percent of a Colombian drug operation."

It troubled him, he added that Michael Jackson lyrics offensive to Jews promptly were excised -- aiming his remarks at Seagrams chief executive officer Edgar Bronfman Jr., 42, a Jewish billionaire whose father, Edgar Sr., is the president of the World Jewish Congress. "The puzzling question that remains to be answered here is does offensive music mean less when the artists are black?"

### **RELATED ARTICLE: Manic Energy or Energetic Misogyny?**

Time Warner, criticized four years ago for releasing a rap song advocating the murder of police officers, now has come under attack for distributing a song that critics say promotes domestic violence. The entertainment giant's latest shock-song is "Smack My Bitch Up" by the British band Prodigy. The song's refrain -- "Change my pitch up/Smack my bitch up? -- is repeated over a heavy rhythmic beat.

The band claims the song is about "extreme manic energy," not domestic violence. But the record company, Maverick and Time Warner's Warner Bros. Records declined it depicts women being manhandled. MTV will only play an edited version between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m.

At least one activist group is taking the lyrics literally. "It would appear that this about violence against women," says Elizabeth Toledo, vice president for action of the National Organization for Women. "While artists should have First Amendment freedoms, it doesn't make it any less

offensive when we have a song depicting violence against women."

Both Maverick, co-authored by Warner Bros. and pop star Madonna, and Warner Bros. Records are standing firmly behind the Prodigy. "The situation is what it's been since Bob Merlis, spokesman for Warner Bros. Records, "In the eight months it's been out, we have not received one complaint here over that song."

The band's album, *Fat of the Land*, appears without a parental-advisory sticker and has sold more than 2 million copies and generated two other hit singles in the United States.

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## **Parental advisory warning labels steeped in controversy**

By DARRICK LEE

Staff Writer

A fan of the radio hits "Let's Go Crazy" and "When Doves Cry," Tipper Gore purchased Prince's 1984 blockbuster album, "Purple Rain," for her then 12-year-old daughter. To Gore's surprise, the rest of the album was not as squeaky clean as the hits she had heard on the radio. She was particularly outraged by the song "Darling Nikki," in which Prince sings some racy lyrics.

Feeling misled as a consumer, Gore felt the time had come to promote awareness of inappropriate lyrics to parents.

In May 1985, the Parent's Music Resource Center, a non-profit, tax-exempt organization, was born. Composed of several wives of senators, congressmen, cabinet officials and notable businessman, the PMRC had support from 700 Club minister Pat Robertson and television host Sheila Walsh.

Sharing unofficial PMRC spokesperson duties alongside Gore was Susan Baker, wife of Secretary of Treasury, James A. Baker III. Baker, who overheard her 7-year-old daughter singing along to Madonna's "Like A Virgin," was eager to lend a hand to the up-and-coming organization.

Although the PMRC's goal was to "educate and inform," the group found itself fighting off accusations of promoting censorship.

"Pornography sold to children is illegal," said Baker. "Enforcing that is not censorship. It is simply the act of a responsible society that recognizes that some material made for adults is not appropriate for children."

In the 1957 case *Roth vs. United States*, obscenity was defined as "a speech that is utterly without redeeming social importance." The 1973 case *Miller vs. California* modified the definition of obscenity to material "lacking serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value."

These definitions were the grounds in which the PMRC used to define "obscene" music.

According to music journalist Eric Nuzum, the controversy surrounding lyrical content of music started long before the PMRC. Giuseppe Verdi's 19<sup>th</sup>-century opera, "La Traviata," was banned across Europe for the lyric, "He took the desired prize in the arms of love."

At the turn of the century, the presence of music censorship increased with jazz and blues growing in popularity. Count Basie and Duke Ellington were early jazz pioneers whose music was referred to as "jungle" and "devil's music." The attacks were in full swing after white audiences – particularly white youth – became attracted to "black music."

In the early 50s, Billie Holiday's "Love For Sale" was banned from radio stations across the country for its prostitution theme. Billboard and Variety trade magazines launched efforts to ban lyrics in rhythm and blues songs. Members of the North Alabama White Citizens Council collectively agreed rock 'n' roll was part of a plot by the NAACP to mongrelize America.

In the 60s, Texas radio stations banned Bob Dylan, citing that it was too difficult to understand his lyrics. Station management feared his songs may have contained offensive messages. However, radio stations continued to play records of other artists covering Dylan's material.

The Curtis Knight single "How Would You Feel" featuring Jimi Hendrix was also given little airplay at the time because of the song's message of injustice against blacks in America.

During the 70s, music underwent drastic changes, and attempts to censor music continued to thrive. The Rev. Jesse Jackson's PUSH organization launched a campaign against disco music, insisting the music promoted promiscuity and drug use. Unable to build the momentum and attain the media attention he needed, however, Jackson abandoned his effort.

In the early 80s, Mercury Records refused to release Frank Zappa's "I Don't Wanna Get Drafted" for fear it would create a backlash against selective service.

Zappa, John Denver and Dee Snider of the group Twisted Sister were all in attendance at the 1985 Senate hearing to investigate the lyrical content of popular music. Also in attendance were representatives from the Recording Industry Association of America.

Organized under the pressures of the PMRC, the hearing became a media field day. Sens. Trible, Hollings and Gore all discussed ways to protect children from "outrageous filth," as Sen. Hollings stated.

Reciting the First Amendment, Zappa took the stand to represent musicians. He referred to the requests of the PMRC as "treating dandruff by decapitation," and stated that the PMRC's ideas were "whipped like an instant pudding by the wives of Big Brother."

Originally, the PMRC proposed that record companies rate records "V" for violence, "X" for sex, "D/A" for drugs and alcohol and "O" for occult. However, by the time of the hearing, Tipper

Gore testified that the PMRC was no longer interested in a rating system but wanted record companies to voluntarily label offensive albums.

Complying with the PMRC, all of the major label record companies embraced the new labeling system.

Out of 7,500 albums released between 1986 and 1989, 49 displayed some type of warning message. By 1990, the black-and-white "Parental Advisory: Explicit Lyrics" label had become the industry standard.

2 Live Crew's "Nasty As They Wanna Be" was one of the first albums to bear the warning sticker. Best known for its hit "Me So Horny," 2 Live Crew's "Nasty" also became the first album to be declared legally obscene. Artists ranging from Sinead O'Connor to Motley Crue spoke in defense of the rappers and their right to free speech.

In 1991, Wal-Mart, the world's largest music retailer, announced it would not carry CDs with the PMRC-approved "Parental Advisory: Explicit Lyrics" label. As a result, the record industry panicked and quickly issued edited versions of CDs to Wal-Mart stores nationwide.

Rap artists were affected most by Wal-Mart's decision. Instead of hearing profanity on a rap album, the listener would instead hear brief moments of silence in which the record company had voluntarily edited the songs.

According to Nuzum, attacks against black music today are similar to the ones of decades ago,

"The music industry's self-regulation of lyrics through the parental-advisory warning label is drawing a not-so-fine line between black and white," he said. "Most of today's CDs that carry the parental-advisory label are from African-American and hip-hop artists.

"It's never been proven that music causes people to do bad things. Outside of people who already had problems to begin with, there are no examples of a cause-and-effect relationship." Since the PMRC and the RIAA's agreement to label explicit CDs, a wide array of artists including Madonna, Lil' Kim, Tupac, Prince, TLC and Marilyn Manson have had the sticker appear on the cover of their CDs.

The most controversial and arguably most successful artist to emerge within the 21<sup>st</sup> century is Eminem. A Detroit native and the music industry's first critically acclaimed white rapper, Eminem has brought his unique style to an audience who might have otherwise never listened to rap music. Consequently, according to Billboard.com, Eminem's CD "The Marshall Mathers LP" has become the best-selling rap CD of all time.

Despite a warning label on Eminem's CD cover, teen-age consumers make up Eminem's core audience. Since most retail stores pay little attention to the label it, has become increasingly easy for anyone of any age to purchase offensive CDs.

In 2003, the controversial rapper shares the same warning label as pop artists Janet Jackson, TLC and Ashanti. This raises the question: If artists' lyrical content is completely different, why do all "offensive" CDs share the same label?

If the RIAA has no say in what record stores sell to minors, the next step is to evaluate the sticker itself. Now that the PMRC's glory days are over, the RIAA should develop different types of warning labels to better assist parents in determining what is appropriate for their children. For example, a Janet Jackson album should be labeled as sexually explicit. A Marilyn Manson CD should be noted as having references to suicide and violence.

In retrospect, the PMRC was a classic example of people coming together for a common cause but with different agendas. Without the input of the 700 Club and other religious-based groups, the PMRC's mission of a censorship-free campaign to protect children could have been effective. But, nowadays, 10-year-olds purchase Eminem CDs without hassle, making the PMRC's efforts during the 1980s a waste of time.

## **Raves**

### **Introduction**

High energy, all-night dance parties and clubs known as "raves," which feature dance music with a fast, pounding beat and choreographed laser programs, have become increasingly popular over the last decade, particularly among teenagers and young adults. Beginning as an underground movement in Europe, raves have evolved into a highly organized, commercialized, worldwide party culture. Rave parties and clubs are now found throughout the United States and in countries around the world. Raves are held either in permanent dance clubs or at temporary venues set up for a single weekend event in abandoned warehouses, open fields, or empty buildings.

Attendance can range from 30 "ravers" in a small club to tens of thousands in a sports stadium or open field. While techno music and light shows are essential to raves, drugs such as MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine), ketamine, GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyrate), Rohypnol, and LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), have become an integral component of the rave culture.

### **History**

Raves evolved from 1980s dance parties, aided by the emergence of European techno music and American house music. (See [Rave Music](#).) European clubs that sponsored raves in the 1980s tried to limit the exposure of attendees to the public and to law enforcement. Raves were secretive, after-hours, private dance parties and were often held in gay clubs where attendance was restricted to invitees or friends of invitees. The site of the party was often kept confidential, and invitees usually were not told the location of the host club until the night of the party.

Because of the restricted access and the secrecy surrounding the locations, the growing rave culture was often described as an "underground" movement.

By the mid-1980s, rave parties overseas had developed such a following among youths and young adults that by 1987, London raves had outgrown most dance clubs. It then became common to hold all-night raves--which drew thousands of people--in large, open fields on the outskirts of the city. As the movement continued to grow in the late 1980s, the first rave parties emerged in U.S. cities such as San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Rave parties and clubs were present in most metropolitan areas of the United States by the early 1990s. Teenagers overtook the traditional young adult ravers and a new rave culture emerged; events became highly promoted, heavily commercialized, and less secretive. Many new U.S. rave promoters were career criminals who recognized the profitability of organizing events tailored to teens. Capitalizing on the growing popularity of raves, specialized industries were developed to market clothes, toys, drugs, and music. Private clubs and secret locations were replaced by stadium venues with off-duty police security.

By the late 1990s, raves in the United States had become so commercialized that events were little more than an exploitation of American youth. Today's raves are characterized by high entrance fees, extensive drug use, exorbitantly priced bottled water, very dark and often dangerously overcrowded dance floors, and "chill rooms," where teenage ravers go to cool down and often engage in open sexual activity. Moreover, many club owners and promoters appear to promote the use of drugs--especially MDMA. They provide bottled water and sports drinks to manage hyperthermia and dehydration; pacifiers to prevent involuntary teeth clenching; and menthol nasal inhalers, chemical lights, and neon glow sticks to enhance the effects of MDMA. In addition, rave promoters often print flyers featuring prominent and repeated use of the letters "E" and "X" (E and X are MDMA monikers) or the word "rollin'" (refers to an MDMA high), surreptitiously promoting MDMA use along with the rave.

The increasing notoriety of raves has caused the rave culture to spread from major metropolitan areas to more rural or conservative locations. Rave parties are emerging in areas of Colorado, Iowa, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin that are not always prepared to manage unexpected crowds of teenagers.

### **Rave Music**

Rave music evolved from 1980s techno, house, and New York garage music. The mix of these different styles of dance music helped mold the modern version of electronic rave music. Today, rave music falls into several categories: ambient, techno, trance, progressive trance, cybertrance, house, jungle, drum 'n' bass, techstep, garage, and big beat.

Although a casual listener may not be able to distinguish between techno and trance, ravers know the music well, and several DJs and bands--unfamiliar to most people--are internationally famous within the rave community. Today's rave DJs are skilled stage performers and are considered artists much like musicians. They mix electronic sounds, beats, and rhythms, often synchronizing

the music to a laser program. Popular DJs sell their music and perform live at the largest rave parties and clubs around the world. Rave organizers announce the appearance of famous DJs on their flyers and on the Internet to promote upcoming raves.

### **Rave Promotion**

Despite the commercialization of raves through the 1990s, many promoters have preserved the tradition of rave location secrecy, more as a novelty than as a necessity. In this tradition, raves are rarely promoted in open media but are advertised on flyers found only at record stores and clothing shops, at other rave parties and clubs, and on rave Internet sites. The flyers or Internet advertisements typically provide only the name of the city where the rave will be held and a phone number for additional information.

The location of the rave often is given to the caller over the telephone, but many promoters further maintain secrecy by providing only a location, called a "map point," where ravers go the night of the rave. At the map point, ravers are told the actual location of the rave. The map point is usually a record or clothing store within a 20-minute drive of the rave.

### **Raves and Club Drugs**

Drugs like MDMA, ketamine, GHB, Rohypnol, and LSD--known collectively as "club drugs"--are an integral part of the rave culture. Many ravers use club drugs and advocate their use, wrongly believing that they are not harmful if they are used "responsibly" and their effects are managed properly. Many of the commercially designed rave clothes display pro-drug messages, and rave posters and flyers often promote drug use.

MDMA is unquestionably the most popular of the club drugs, and evidence of MDMA use by teenagers can be seen at most rave parties. Ketamine and GHB also are used at raves, as is Rohypnol, although to a lesser extent. A recent resurgence in the availability and use of some hallucinogens--LSD, PCP (phencyclidine), psilocybin, and peyote or mescaline --has also been noted at raves and dance clubs and may necessitate their inclusion in the club drug category. Inhalants like nitrous oxide are sometimes found at rave events; nitrous oxide is sold in gas-filled balloons called "whippets" for \$5-\$10.

Rampant use of club drugs at raves may be leading to the use of other and highly addictive drugs by youths. There have been widespread reports of increasing availability and use of Asian methamphetamine tablets (frequently referred to as "yaba") at California raves and nightclubs. Heroin is being encountered more frequently at raves and clubs in large metropolitan areas, especially in the eastern United States. A wider variety of visually appealing and easy-to-administer forms of MDMA, LSD, heroin, and combination tablets are also found at raves and on college campuses.

### **Rave Clothing and Paraphernalia**

Many young ravers wear distinctive clothing and carry paraphernalia commonly associated with club drug use and the rave culture. Ravers dress for comfort. They usually wear lightweight, loose-fitting clothes and dress in layers, allowing them to remove clothing as they become

overheated from dancing for hours. Many wear loose shorts or very wide-legged or baggy pants. Ravers wear T-shirts, bikini tops, tank tops, tube tops, and open-back halter tops to help keep cool. After hours of dancing and often after using MDMA--which elevates body temperature--many ravers have removed most of their clothing. Some ravers, especially females, wear costumes to rave events, dressing as princesses, cartoon characters, or other fantasy figures that match the theme of the rave (e.g., futuristic, space, mystic).

Ravers often wear bright accessories like bracelets, necklaces, and earrings made of either plastic beads or pill-shaped sugar candies. MDMA users sometimes use these accessories to disguise their drugs, stringing MDMA tablets mixed with the candies. Many ravers chew on baby pacifiers or lollipops to offset the effects of involuntary teeth grinding caused by MDMA. Pacifiers are worn around the user's neck, often on plastic beaded necklaces.

Many people bring various items to rave events to enhance the effects of MDMA. Ravers use bright chemical lights and flashing lights to heighten the hallucinogenic properties of MDMA and the visual distortions brought on by its use. Chemical glow sticks, bracelets, and necklaces are commonly worn at raves and waved in the eyes of MDMA users for visual stimulus. Ravers often insert flashing red lights in their belly buttons (held in place with a mild adhesive) and pin blinking lights in the shape of hearts, stars, and animals to their clothing to provide additional visual stimulation to MDMA users. Ravers that use MDMA often wear painter's masks with menthol vapor rub applied to the inside of the mask. MDMA users believe that by inhaling the menthol fumes, they are enhancing the effects of the drug. They may be adding to their risk of hyperthermia, however, because the fumes cause eyes and nasal passages to dry out.

### **Anti-Rave Initiatives**

In the late 1990s, many communities began attempts to reduce the number of raves in their areas and to curb the use of club drugs. Several cities passed new ordinances designed to regulate rave activity, while others began enforcing existing laws that helped authorities monitor raves more closely.

Cities such as Chicago, Denver, Gainesville, Hartford, Milwaukee, and New York took deliberate steps to combat raves. These cities reduced rave activity through enforcement of juvenile curfews, fire codes, health and safety ordinances, liquor laws, and licensing requirements for large public gatherings. Many communities also began requiring rave promoters to retain, at the promoters' expense, onsite ambulance and emergency medical services and uniformed police security for large rave events. Because of these measures, many rave promoters and organizers moved their operations to other areas.

Perhaps the most successful anti-rave initiative was "Operation Rave Review," which was initiated in January 2000 in New Orleans. Following the overdose death of a 17-year-old girl at a rave party in 1998, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) assessed the extent of rave activity in the New Orleans area. The assessment indicated an apparent correlation between rave activity and club drug overdoses resulting in emergency room visits. For example, in a 2-year period, 52 raves were held at the New Orleans State Palace Theater, during which time approximately 400 teenagers overdosed and were transported to local emergency rooms.

Following this assessment, the DEA, New Orleans Police Department, and U.S. Attorney's Office developed a methodology for the potential prosecution of rave promoters who allowed open, unabated drug use at the events. They used 21 U.S.C. § 856 as a basis to investigate rave promoters and to gather evidence that the promoters knowingly and intentionally allowed the distribution and use of numerous controlled substances during rave events. (See [statute](#).) As a result of this investigation, several rave promoters were arrested and the largest rave operation in New Orleans was closed.

Since the completion of Operation Rave Review, the number of overdoses and emergency room visits caused by club drug use has dropped 90 percent, and MDMA overdoses have been eliminated, according to the DEA and New Orleans hospital officials. The law enforcement agencies that participated in Operation Rave Review developed a five-step process that might be employed effectively in other areas experiencing high levels of rave activity, club drug overdoses, and related emergency room visits. The process employed consisted of the following steps:

**Identify rave promoters.** Potential subjects for investigation included all parties responsible for managing the production and promotion of the raves, including the owners of the property where the event was held.

**Compile emergency medical service (EMS) records.** Records of medical transports from the rave venue to local emergency rooms were collected. Retrieval of medical records sometimes required grand jury or administrative subpoenas or court orders.

**Conduct undercover operations inside the venue during rave events.** Undercover investigators purchased paraphernalia (chemical light sticks, pacifiers, and drug test kits) at the venue and filmed ravers using drugs and using the paraphernalia to enhance or manage the effects of the drugs. Undercover investigators filmed drug purchases by undercover officers who purchased drugs from as many different people as possible and as quickly as possible to clearly demonstrate the availability of drugs at the venue. Undercover investigators filmed the actions or inaction of security personnel hired by the rave promoter, and they also filmed patrons being treated or transported to local emergency rooms.

**Place an undercover officer.** Undercover agents or officers posed as job applicants for security positions and obtained interviews with the rave promoter. The undercover officers asked for the promoter's general expectations of security personnel and specific expectations of security personnel observing drug use or distribution.

**Execute search warrants.** Search warrants were executed at the rave venue, at offsite offices, and at the home of the rave promoter. Officers and agents seized all documents and items relating to the ownership, advertisement, promotion, and operation of the rave venue, including but not limited to purchase orders for rave paraphernalia, water, and other stock. Officers and agents also seized employment records identifying security personnel and any memoranda detailing their responsibilities, correspondence or contracts with EMS services, and financial records that detailed costs and profits associated with raves.

## **Conclusion**

Raves have developed over the past decade from a small subculture to the highly commercialized and widespread exploitation of young people by large-scale rave promoters. The growing awareness of the nature of rave activity and the effects of club drug use have moved many communities to action. In order to curtail rave activity, communities and law enforcement agencies are enforcing existing fire codes, health and safety ordinances, and liquor laws, and are establishing juvenile curfews and licensing requirements for large public gatherings. They are requiring rave promoters and club owners to pay for building or liquor licenses, medical services, and security for their events, all in an effort to force rave promoters to move or cease their operations.