

OPINION

THE BATTALION

Grammy Dreams

Eminem's talent, unique message merit awarding him Album of the Year

Recently, the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences (NARAS) announced that Eminem, a 27-year-old rapper from Detroit, has been nominated for four Grammy awards, including Album of the Year.



J.J. TREVINO

Although millions of fans around the world have grown to embrace his talent and creativity, organizations are vying to keep his phenomenal album from receiving the award. The news of his nomination spawned thousands of emails and calls to the NARAS office.

The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, has threatened to protest the Feb. 21 awards ceremony. The group said giving Eminem the best album award would be a disservice to society and would serve as an approval for his obscenity-laden lyrics and raw graphical style.

From the birth of the recording industry, rebellious works from musicians like Elvis, The Beatles and now Eminem have stirred up seemingly unavoidable controversies. Music's greatest tradition — encouraging artists to be themselves — now finds itself plagued by narrow-minded critics who undermine artists' originality and resist the evolution of new sounds.

Eminem rocked the rap world when his debut album, The Slim Shady LP became an overnight success. His second album, The Marshall Mathers LP, which sold over 8 million copies and currently stands as the second-best album in 2000, faced critical opposition from the

minute it was released. The second album, named after his given birth name, reflects Eminem's harsh upbringing, covering issues like poverty and single parenthood.

As seen with his own eyes and written by his own hands, Eminem's powerful creation of art should not be honored for its message or its content, but solely for its artistic and technical achievements.

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Eminem's explosion onto the music charts, after years of struggle for success, has raised the level and standards of rap music pioneered by Run DMC in the early 1980s. By remaining atop the hip-hop industry, Newsweek magazine hails this white superstar as the heir to the legendary Tupac Shakur and Notorious B.I.G.

Conveying a message one should not mistake for anything more than a joke, his lyrical style is so clever and intricate the admiration of nationwide music magazines has become routine for Eminem.

In fact, in an interview by Rolling Stone in response to naming the LP their pick for best album of the year, Eminem himself passes these lyrics off as a cruel joke. Mindful of such storytelling genius, with a remarkable sense of

cartoonish-like humor, Spin magazine named Eminem their Artist of the Year, yet another prestigious accomplishment.

Quick to defend Eminem's Grammy nominations, NARAS President C. Michael Greene claims the controversy over Eminem's nomination is no different than the actions of comedian Lenny Bruce, another groundbreaking performer found offensive by some yet enjoyed by many. Greene even called the Eminem recording "remarkable."

This album should be viewed the way other verbally explicit works are, without questioning the content or judgment of the author and the thoughts he or she draws upon. The roads literary works have paved are in line with Eminem's intentions to speak his mind.

Although Eminem's thought process seems twisted and irrational, one cannot overlook or dismiss the actions that speak louder than his words. Eminem never committed any of the graphic actions outlined in his songs. His actions thus far have only proven his outstanding ability to create fierce visual fantasies and vivid illusions in his listeners minds.

It is this astonishing verbal and narrative agility that NARAS saw in Eminem when it nominated him for Album of the Year. Eminem does such an extraordinary job of creating his music that one cannot help but root for his success at the Grammys.

Far from being a model citizen, Eminem deserves recognition for the imagination he possesses and the success he has worked so hard to achieve.

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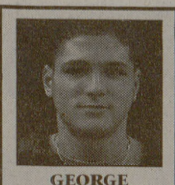


RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

A Waste of Time

XFL football promises poor quality, trashy entertainment

World Wrestling Federation (WWF) owner Vince McMahon, the same man who rakes in millions every week by objectifying women, stereotyping minorities and promoting homophobia, has partnered with NBC for his next twisted vision of family entertainment — the Extreme Football League (XFL).



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Flamboyant and uninhibited, this new league is intended to appeal to those sick of the penalty flags, referees and head coaches that give the NFL its sense of discipline. Lately, McMahon has been trashing the NFL, calling it the "No-Fun League," but this label is little more than a pitch for his new brand of football. Debuting Feb. 3, the XFL promises to be a more-violent and shameless brand of football, complete with helmet-cams, celebrity guest appearances and silicon-laden cheerleaders.

But what the XFL does not promise, and cannot promise, is legitimately good football. After all, this league will not be composed of premiere athletes of NFL-caliber talent. Instead, it will feature the sport's rejects — the

ones too old for college football and not good enough to contribute in NFL Europe, the Canadian Football League or the Arena League — much less the NFL.

Drew Pearson, general manager of the New York-New Jersey Hitmen, echoed these sentiments, "You'll notice the drop-off from the NFL ... these guys ... they're here because this just may be their last chance in football, and they are going to leave their hearts out there on the field."

Player salaries, ranging from \$40,000 to \$50,000, based on position, can by no means be considered competitive in an age where top cyclists and skateboarders make hundreds of thousands of dollars annually.

"If you pay a guy \$40,000, then that's what you're going to get: a \$40,000 football player, which ain't much," Chet Simmons, former USFL commissioner and ESPN president, recently commented in Men's Journal. "If the level of play is significantly below what they are used to, then they are going to stop watching."

But the American viewing public has more to fear than just bad football. McMahon, who has all the class and character of Howard Stern, has built his reputation (and fortune) by glorifying sleaze on his wrestling broadcasts, and the XFL will be his new outlet.

NBC, McMahon's partner-in-crime, has scheduled XFL games to air during prime time on Saturday nights. Great, the kids will be awake, so they can learn poor sportsmanship and possibly a new expletive, and still be in bed by 11 p.m.

The new league may turn into a public relations black eye for NBC, which is supposed to be a class act. The same network that is home to the Olympics, the World Series and the Superbowl is now home to the XFL.

The upstart XFL will also be a financial gamble, reportedly costing over \$100 million for the eight-team league. WWF stock took a 25 percent plunge after McMahon announced plans for the league because many Wall Street analysts fear it will go the way of the U. S. Football League, the All-American Football League and the World Football League, which all failed miserably. McMahon's response: "Wall Street can kiss my ass."

Among the changes to be implemented by the XFL are: no fair catches, a 35-second play clock, and cameras and microphones everywhere — on coaches, players and even in the locker rooms. But Vince, for decency's sake, keep the cameras out of the bathrooms.

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Post-sentence lockup decision is fair for all

In a major decision last week, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that post-sentence lockup of violent sex predators is not punitive and does not constitute double jeopardy, the law that states one cannot be tried twice for the same crime.



BRIENNE PORTER

The case came before the court when a six-time convicted rapist was placed in Washington state's Special Commitment Center after his criminal sentence had expired. While many may see this Act as extended punishment for criminals, the opinion of the Supreme Court was based on a multitude of legal precedents and Constitutionality.

According to the Supreme Court majority opinion, "The Washington State's Community Protection Act of 1990 authorizes the civil commitment of 'sexually violent predators,' persons who suffer from a mental abnormality or personality disorder that makes them likely to engage in predatory acts of sexual violence."

The court reviewed the statute, which was ruled to be civil (not pertaining to criminal charges) by the Washington Supreme Court, to determine whether the criminal could claim the statute was punitive "as applied" to him. The court decided that the "as applied" (how the law affects the individual in question) decision is not double jeopardy.

According to Reuters, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor said "that a law found to be civil in nature cannot be deemed to be punitive as applied to a single individual in violation of the constitutional protection against being punished twice for the same crime" in the opinion of the majority of the court.

Since the law is civil, and a defendant cannot use the "as applied" theory, double jeopardy is not a factor for release because double jeopardy only applies in criminal cases.

To many post-sentence confinement may seem harsh, but it is not. The new statute is being used to keep habitually violent offenders from returning to soci-

ety without proper treatment for their malfunction. The Washington law is a way of protecting society against mentally ill sex offenders. According to The Associated Press, this type of lockup has been compared to "the state practice of involuntarily committing the mentally ill for treatment." This law is not limited to those who are already imprisoned, but to people who are found not guilty by reason of insanity and those who are incompetent to stand trial as well.

Justice John Paul Stevens wrote the only dissent to the verdict. "If the conditions of confinement are such that a detainee has been punished twice in violation of the double jeopardy clause, it is irrelevant that the scheme has been previously labeled as civil without full knowledge of the effects of the statute," according to Stevens.

Stevens said he believes that even though the statute was once considered civil it may not be if the court does not know all the conditions of the confinement.

While Stevens has a legitimate point, the Washington Supreme Court had already decided the Act was civil, therefore, this was not the question the U.S. Supreme Court was deciding.

The Supreme Court was asked to decide if the Act constituted double jeopardy "as applied" to the defendant. According to O'Connor, in the majority opinion, "that kind of case-by-case analysis of whether an individual prisoner's confinement was civil or punitive is 'unworkable.'"

The court's decision to reject the "as applied" theory of looking at laws has left little room for confusion. By making this decision, the court has clearly said laws do not change with the individual. This statement solidifies the idea that the law is the same for everyone.

These detainees still have other options to sue for their release, but the Supreme Court has closed one avenue. The Act has the ability to protect society from those criminals who are mentally unstable, and calmed fears of criminals returning to their prior way of life.

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IAN BEDEEN/THE BATTALION