

{The Evolution of Music Censorship}

“I can’t help it, I’m just a slave to the music”
-Michael Jackson-

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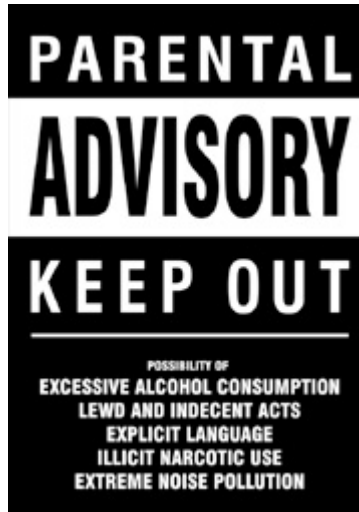
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Music Censorship

Music has always been a way to express ideas. However, like television and movies, music is also seen as a way of influencing children and teenagers. Popular music has always been a subject of censorship. Lyrics containing references to sex, drugs, and alcohol are seen as reasons to censor certain music from the public audiences. There are eight main principles that censorship is based on: differentiation, protecting the young, private vs. public consumption, artistic merit, safeguarding National interests, public involvement, simplification of procedures, and targeting at mass distributors. The question of music censorship has been going on for decades. It is not only a matter of legality and constitutionality, but censorship is also about morality and personal preference. Those in favor of censorship feel that some music harmfully affects society and the American culture and that censorship can help to preserve the culture. Whereas those who oppose censorship believe it impairs constitutional right of freedom of speech and takes away the ability to express ideas. The constant debate of censorship has been going on for decades and does not show any signs of changing. There will never be a “right” answer to this issue; it will always be a matter of opinion.

History of Censorship

How many generations of kids have heard their parents say, "When I was young, music was good, not this junk you listen to!" The answer is that music censorship has been going on for many years. It dates back to the turn of the 20th century with the arrival of ragtime music, a type of music that was created by African American children. One of the most popular ragtime songs entitled "Maple Leaf Rag" contained lyrics that talked about going to a town dance, hardly controversial by today's standards, but challenged the authorities then. A few decades later, a new controversial artist, Miles Davis, fused jazz and rock music together and was strongly criticized and accused of leading jazz astray.

Another controversial band of yesteryear, The Beatles, broke controversial ground, and their music temporarily banned in Britain because of lyrics about drug usage. Parents cringed at the idea of their daughter going to a Beatles concert because of the exposure to crazed fans and immoral

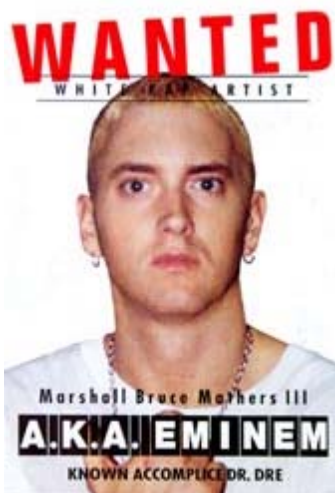
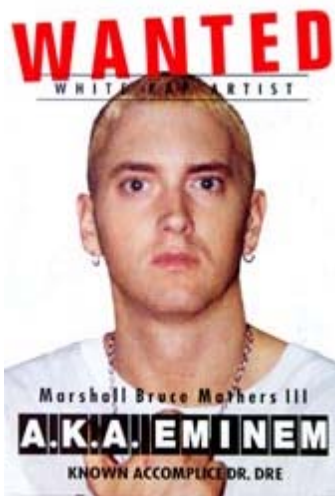
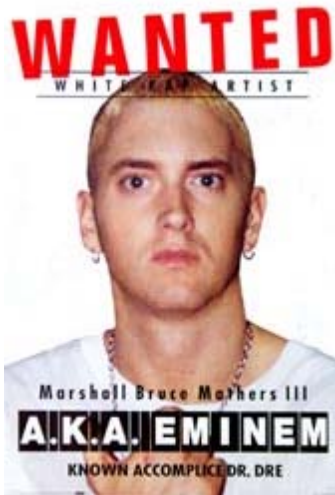
his interracial music, there may never be another artist who reaches such a controversial status, though some contemporary musicians are trying. In one of Eminem's latest songs, his lyrics read, "Though I'm not the first king of controversy/I am the worst thing since Elvis Presley." Though these artists and songs are no longer part of pop culture, the paths they paved will never be forgotten.

Colleen Whewell



Elvis Presley

SLIM SHADY



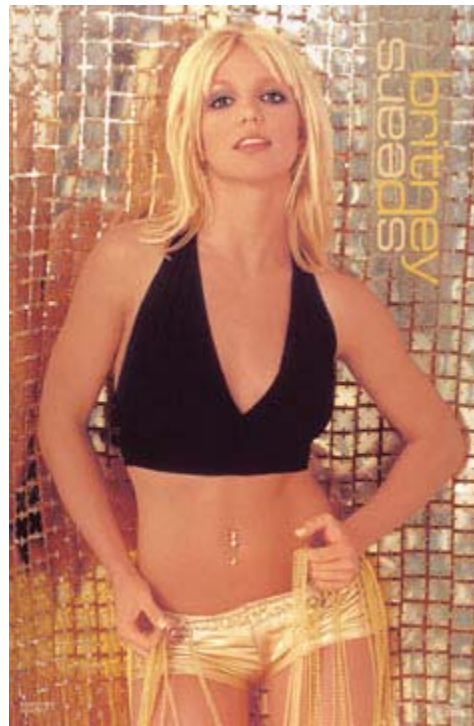
Eminem (a cat or a mouse)

In today's society one of the most highly censored artists is Eminem. He is a Caucasian rap artist whose lyrics contain many controversial subjects from references to "fags," fantasies of raping his own mother, jokes about domestic violence, and excessive amounts of profanity. All of these topics which would lead a person to believe that his lyrics should be censored, and that these lyrics promote violence among adolescents. On one of the many websites that contain information on Eminem and his lyrics, Eminem is found stating, "A lot of my rhymes are just to get chuckles out of people. Anybody with half a brain is going to be able to tell when I'm joking and when I'm serious." To prove this to be a point and that he does not write music to criticize different groups of people Eminem came up with the idea to sing with Elton John at the 2001 Grammy Awards. This gesture was to prove that Eminem has no harsh feelings towards homosexual people. Another accomplishment of this artist is that he recently received an Academy Award for best song, "Lose Yourself" off of his 8-mile soundtrack. Also despite Eminem being a highly censored artist his album Marshall Mathers LP was up for album of the year and three other rap categories. Eminem also managed to sell 7.9 million copies of this album. Music is a form of expression and like many other artists of our past his name may eventually go down as being one of the best recording artists of our time.

-Bridget Weslow

Oops I did it Again

(Britney Spears)



feel that these violent messages are hidden by upbeat and catchy music tones. While the debate over what music should be censored and what should not continues, musical lyrics will continue to be promoted and it is up to the parents to decide what they feel is appropriate for their children.

-Beth Lasko

We're all stars now, in the dope show

(Marilyn Manson)



Has Censorship of Marilyn Manson Ceased?

In the past few years, there has been definite protesting of artists' music and the message that they send to people, especially children. Today, groups and artists like Eminem, Christina Aguilera, and Slipknot have all received recent protesting against their works. However, Marilyn Manson, once viewed as the ultimate anti-Christ in this country, has seemed to faze himself out of the public eye. This is interesting because about five ago, Marilyn Manson seemed to be the only person receiving flack about his music.

One of the biggest tragedies that the United States has ever seen was that of the shootings that occurred in Littleton, Colorado. At Columbine High School, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold killed 12 students and one teacher, shooting the innocent before committing their own lives as well. When this first happened, many were alarmed and unsure what to think, but as soon as the media got a hold of the fact that these kids listened to Marilyn Manson's music, he was immediately typecast as the person who was responsible for these vicious crimes. At first, Manson could not go anywhere without being accused of the boys' actions. In an article by Ari Armstrong, he stated that people were simply just exercising their right of free speech. Marilyn Manson countered with his own article defending himself of the accusations. He stated, "When it comes down to who's to blame for the high school murders in Littleton, Colorado, throw a rock and you'll hit someone who's guilty. We're the people who sit back and tolerate children

owning guns, and we're the ones who tune in and watch the up-to-the-minute details of what they do with them." With arguments like this one, Manson seemed to get the media off of his back, which brings this article to the main focus; where has he been since?

Marilyn Manson, by writing his own responses in literary form and also by staying out of the spotlight, has single handedly gotten himself away from talks of censorship and blame for other people's actions. The whole issue of censorship is totally in the hands of the media. They choose whom they want to label and cover, and they choose who they have had enough of. In this case, Marilyn Manson became old news and, much to his probable delight, I do not think he minded.

-Arie Wolfert



"Everybody's someone else's nigger, I know you are so am I. I wasn't born with enough middle fingers. I don't need to choose a side."

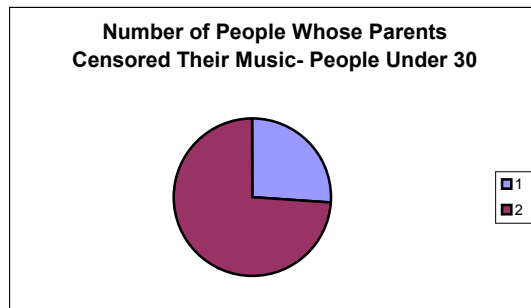
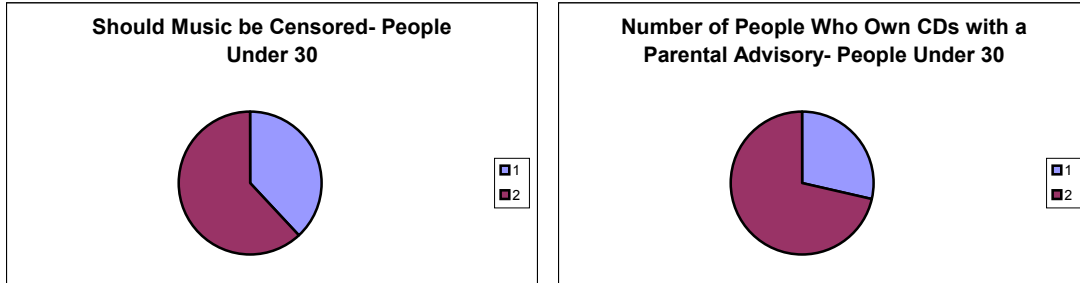
- Marilyn Manson



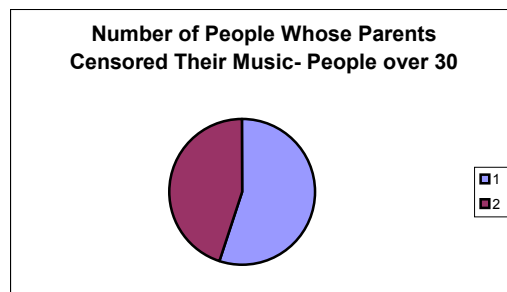
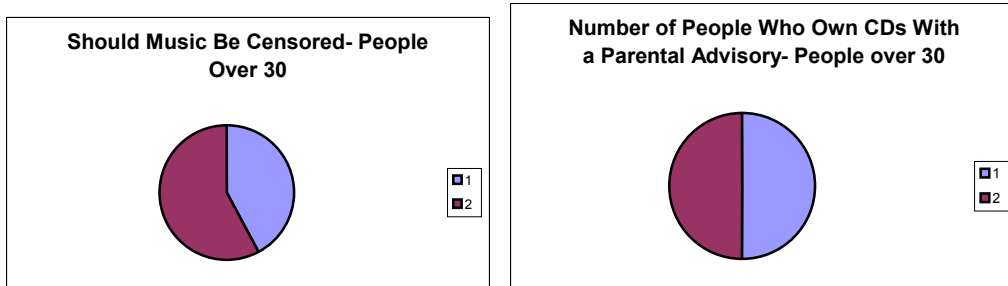
Hittin the Streets

Instead of just going straight to the websites and hitting the books we decided to find out what the people around us on campus and in our hometown communities thought about the censorship of music. While the ages ranged from fourteen to sixty-eight the answers all shared many similarities on the side of music should not be censored and also on the side of music needs to be censored. One of the questions that was asked of all of the survey takers was, “Do you find any songs to be offensive to gender or society as a whole?” A common theme among the answers for this question was that Eminem lyrics contain very offensive language and they are offensive to both gender and society. Eminem’s name appeared on around seventy percent of all of the survey takers, all of which commented on how offensive his lyrics are. An eighteen-year-old male commented on Eminem’s lyrics by stating, “Yes, some songs are offensive to our society, but it is just the style of music Eminem does. It is just lyrics.” Since these songs are just lyrics some people felt that people of today’s society are looking too far into the whole music censorship issue, and that music is simply a form of expression that is given to us through the first amendment. No matter what the lyrics say if it sells then artists are going to continue to produce the same kind of music whether it is offensive or not. People also commented that people in today’s society take things too seriously and music lyrics really are not causing people to run off and do horrible things because of what they hear in the song lyrics. There are people who feel very different on this issue and their largest complaint was rap music. A twenty-year-old female commented on rap music by saying, “Rap music should all be censored because it contains discriminatory comments and leads people to have prejudice beliefs.” The problem is that it is not possible for companies to take producing rights away from artists for their music, and it is up to the parents to monitor what their children are listening to.

The kids



The old timers...



Survey Results

Music is a large form of expression in today's society and influences many people within our own lives. While interviewing a large number of people we found that results from the adults, ages 30 and up, contained some similarities to those of the teenagers, ages 30 and below. For both age groups it was just a little bit under fifty percent of the people that feel that music should be censored. Also a common occurrence for both the adult and teenage group is that Eminem and primarily other rap music should be at the top for being censored. An unexpected result that occurred in the teenage group is that even though more than fifty percent of the people felt that music should be censored only about twenty-five percent of the people actually own CDs with a parental advisory on the label. There has been a large decrease in the number of parents that monitor the music that their children listen to. It has decreased almost twenty-five percent. With as much controversy as there is over whether or not artists should be censored, parents need to do censoring within the house too.

-Ashley Zergott





Music lyrics are a very controversial issue and will continue to be as new music is produced. It is not just rap music that people are looking to have censored there is a wide range of artists. Popular artists such as Brittany Spears who millions of people listen to has been in and out of the censorship spotlight, saying that her lyrics encourage sex, suicide, and are degrading to females. Eminem is another current artist who many people would like to see censored, but yet he continues to sell millions of copies of his album and his movie was a recent hit in the theatres. Marlyn Manson has finally been able to escape censorship issues after he was accused of being a large reason for the killing spree that happened at Columbine High School. Like Marlyn Manson the popular artists of today will begin to fade into the past and a new generation of music will evolve that people feel needs to be censored. Maybe eventually these artists of today will become known as one of the greatest artist to ever live, as Elvis did. What is said in music lyrics is a freedom of speech that all Americans are entitled to and this ongoing issue of music censorship may never end.

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