

Eminem, music video analysis

Business



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Eminem, “ My Name Is” Marshall Mathers, better known as Eminem, is recognized for his work as a rap artist who is able to connect with his audience through humor and rhythmically dicey lyrics.

Eminem’s “ My Name Is” music video is able signify whiteness and rearticulate race with the use intertextual editing techniques that parody common representations of whiteness. Eminem is using his “ My Name Is” video as an approach to solidify his style of rapping and thus create new political and cultural authenticities that entice questions of race representation in the 1990’s and beyond. (Kajikawa). The release of The Slim Shady LP was the beginning of Eminem’s ride to the hip-hop hall of fame and it was with this album that Eminem was truly able to transcend racial boundaries. Hip-hop as a sub-culture more specifically its product, rap, had set racial boundaries early on with many of the popular artists being of African American decent.

Rap music is unique and different from typical pop music because “ most rappers write their own lyrics, because the lyrics represent their feelings and true life” (Satriawati 3) and the black artists wrote about the struggles in their lives such as, overcoming race and unequal representation of all black people living in the United States. Eminem, having grown up with similar conditions, but with a different skin color writes about his own struggle and about some of the controversies dealing with white men and women in the 1990’s. Eminem’s “ My Name Is” music video explores the realm of controversy surrounding whiteness with clips of Eminem mocking the Clinton scandal, Marilyn Manson, homoerotic sexual relations between students and teachers and of course drug abusing mothers along with several others.

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Eminem uses these controversy generators as ammo for his weapon of whiteness self-realization. (Stubbs 37) Eminem's ability to make people take a step back and look at themselves and the realm of whiteness that surrounds them and question its integrity shines brightly in "My Name Is".

This weapon functions well due to the technical elements used in the video. "My Name Is" director, Phillip Atwell, successfully uses intertextual editing to further increase the power of this weapon. Atwell begins the video with a shot of a rather disgusting, yet true, representation of a white American couple getting set to watch TV. He begins to intertextualize along with setting a rather fast paced tempo for the video when he cuts to a close-up of the TV and then shows what it is displaying. Atwell artfully shapes the lyrics of the song by using meaningful parodies mocking the culture of whiteness.

The beauty of this video comes not only with the production and performance of the lyrics, but with the post-production. Atwell shows the audience various TV shows and then cuts in between them to show the disgusting couple doing disgusting things as if they are the product of the environment that is being created on the TV. The lives of this couple can be viewed as being the narrative aspect of the video. Atwell also uses techniques to show the channels change back and forth to show that they may appear different at first, but in reality they are all attempting to exploit a similar topic, the topic of whiteness. There are also instances of a form of graphic match in Atwell's video when the shot is the TV show and it changes showing the character, Eminem, in the same position on the screen just wearing different costumes.

These instances are used so “ the viewer can revel in an interesting edit, in a nice shape shared by two images, and in the cleverness of the director’s and the editor’s work” (Vernallis 30). Atwell’s portrayal of all the different characters played by the same person, Eminem, exemplifies Vernallis’ importance of “ showcasing the star” because she says that “ a focus on editing can help us to understand the relation between music video’s star-making dimension and its modes of continuity and signification” (Vernallis 47). Atwell’s portrayal of Eminem as all of the things he dislikes about American popular white culture sets the tone of not only the video, but for future opinions about the star. Atwell along with Eminem’s lyrics have successfully portrayed and exploited the realm of whiteness in the United States. They have taken extremely touchy subject matter and transformed it into a heavy humor-filled form of media.

Eminem has not only made it clear that he is not copying other black rappers music, but instead has been able to get his message across, signify whiteness and get the world to view race with a new eye. Works Cited “ Eminem -. ” Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Web. 21 Feb. 2010.

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