



Campus Women



Is Madonna good for feminism?

by Stacey Pinchuk from the Charlatan

Over the past few years, Madonna has been many things: a sexy boy toy, a blond bombshell and a lean, mean muscle machine. Somehow, "feminist" doesn't quite make it onto this list. Yet some of today's feminists are heralding Madonna as a woman of power and prestige who is promoting the advancement of women in the 90's. Yeah, right.

One argument in Madonna's favour is that she has proven capable of inventing and re-inventing herself, and avoids being restricted to a single "female" image.

Caleton graduate and feminist philosopher Susan Bordo spoke on the subject "Feminism Reconceives the Body" on campus Sept. 13. She opposes the pro-Madonna view but explained that some feminists admire "the plasticity of Madonna's continuous transformation and her erotic energy that escapes containment."

Madonna cannot be pinned down to a single image, and thus escaped containment. She changes her image so often that she negates all substance to her as a person. The result is fake and unreal.

Why is plasticity viewed in a positive light? what ever happened to reality? Barbie dolls are now facing still competition from anatomically realistic "Happy To Be Me" dolls. So why is Madonna being praised for possessing the same fake and outdated qualities as Barbie? Madonna's ever-changing persona leaves her about as deep as Barbie's gaze.

In addition, Madonna is commended for being in complete control over her career and herself. She is not being exploited by anyone. Rather, as Bordo explained, she is consciously choosing to exploit herself and her body.

Exploitation is indeed a negative word. By being

self-imposed, it does not miraculously take on a positive connotation.

Madonna is conforming to the long-standing oppressive system that compels women to exploit their bodies as a tool for success. Whether this conformity takes place by choice or by force, how can it be good for feminism?

It is difficult to draw the fine line between choice and force. Perhaps Madonna has consciously chosen to wear minimal amounts of clothing and to flaunt her body. But would she be as successful if she didn't? Did she really have a choice?

Madonna has succumbed to the woes of societal pressure, under the guise of choice. She is conforming to the system instead of using her power to change it. Not only is Madonna failing to advance feminism, she is taking it a giant step backwards. In the "Justify Your Love" video, Madonna is the aggressor. She is seeking sex and calling the shots. So is a prostitute who makes the first move when approaching a client considered a feminist too?

"She grabs her crotch a lot. This, too, is supposed to be feminist: Michael Jackson did it and so can she, nyah, nyah, nyah," writes Barbara Grizutti in article "Can Madonna Justify Madonna" from June issue of Mademoiselle.

In the "Open Your Heart" video, Madonna gyrates repulsively as a peep show dancer, while a young boy plays a would-be customer. At the end of the video, Madonna kisses the boy. Not only are Madonna's dance moves degrading and insulting to women, but she hints at paedophilia and eroticizes the sexuality of a child at the video's end.

"What is Madonna doing there?" Bordo asked.

"What did she do to get herself there? What are little boys doing when they watch her? And what a