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Bitch! I Interviewed Madonna (Part Two)

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Part Two of EDGE'S two-part interview with Madonna during the release of her 13th studio album "Rebel Heart."

EDGE witnessed the media mayhem that only the Material Girl can create firsthand last Monday night when Madonna sat down with select members of the gay press at the Midtown Manhattan offices of her record label, Interscope.

Her newly released album "Rebel Heart" is arguably Madonna's best effort in years. From the first single's deep-house, gospel-infused empowerment anthem, "Living For Love" (her record 44th number-one hit on Billboard's Hot Dance Club Songs chart) to moody and mature ballads like "Devil Pray" and "Joan of Arc," the hauntingly redemptive "Ghosttown" (the likely next single), and just about every other genre in between, the album fully embraces its diversity. Among the many standouts in the epic 19-song set (just 14 are featured on the standard album) are the ridiculously over-the-top "Holy Water" ("Whenever I write about sex, I always do it tongue-in-cheek," she recently told Rolling Stone. "[This song] is obviously meant to be funny.") and the girl-done-been-wronged track "HeartBreakCity." And then there's my personal favorite, the deluxe album's fierce finale, the Avicii-produced rock-tinged title track "Rebel Heart" (oddly not included on the standard album).

In Part One of our Madonna interview, Madge discussed the process to putting together her 13th studio album and the notorious leaks that lead to the early release of some of its tracks.

In Part Two, Madonna opens up about the inspiration behind "Rebel Heart," the videos for her new tracks, her family's love of HBO's "Game of Thrones" and what her kids think of her latest album.

ROUNDTABLE # 5: Thematically and lyrically, I would say "Rebel Heart" is a lot more self-referential than you've been in the past. During the process of the writing and the production, was that something you did maybe intentionally, or was it just part of the process, like you're looking back on your career now?

MADONNA: I don't know, is the only answer I can tell you. I didn't set out to write certain kinds of songs, I just set out to write GOOD songs, and that was the mood I was in and that was what I was channeling. Sometimes I was in nostalgic moods and looking back; sometimes I was in the mood to write a song as I was writing in my journal, and reveal certain parts of myself that I was ready to reveal.

ROUNDTABLE # 5: You've talked in interviews about the way you approached this album was that you wanted to go about it in a singer/songwriter approach, and a lot of the songs are like that -- without the production, all the [bells & whistles] -- you could perform them without all that.

MADONNA: Like when we run out of oil, and then we run out of electricity, I can just light a candle and strum my guitar and sing you a song, yeah.

ROUNDTABLE # 1: I wanted to ask you about one of my favorite songs on the album, "Body Shop" --

MADONNA: YAY!

ROUNDTABLE # 1: What I love about it is that the method of music is folksy, like you said, and maybe a little bit like a lullaby, but then you listen to the words and they're --

MADONNA: Sexually provocative.

ROUNDTABLE # 1: Was that your intention to contrast the instrumental and music with the lyrics?

MADONNA: No. Again, it just happened. I was working with Toby Gad who spent a lot of time in India, and actually there's a sitar -- the song has a very Indian flavor to it -- and I liked the idea: a car -- the body of a car -- it's a kind of sexual metaphor -- what you do TO a car, what you do IN a car -- DRIVE. Lots of innuendos, lots of fun. I mean, we all love a really cute mechanic, right?

ROUNDTABLE # 2: "Body Shop" is also one of my favorite songs. If you were a car, what type of car would you be?

[GROUP LAUGHS]

MADONNA: [Long pause] ... that's a good one ... I'm probably a Bentley.

EDGE: I was going to say Lamborghini.

MADONNA: Lamborghini...But I might be an Aston Martin. And then I might be a Jaguar. And then I might be a Cadillac. So it depends on what day it is. I'm not a Smart Car.

[GROUP LAUGHS]

ROUNDTABLE # 5: Back to the "Living For Love" video, is [this] going to be something we're going to get to see again?

MADONNA: You mean the cinematic aspect of it, and the storytelling aspect of it? I guess so. The thing about that song, it's such a passionate song. I had to present it in a passionate way, and I used mythology to tell the story, with the story of the Minotaur - the matador - fighting for love. And the color red. And flowers. Horns, and death. And naked men. You know, the important things in life.

I don't know. I don't want to make every video the same. But I did love the richness of that video. To me it felt like a painting that came to life. That's what I was trying to do. But I wouldn't want to do that for every video. Like when I do "Bitch, I'm Madonna," it's going to be a whole different aesthetic.

ROUNDTABLE #5: Well, I'm glad that one's getting a video! [GROUP LAUGHS]

MADONNA: If Diplo has his way, there will be one.

EDGE: Last year when you dressed up as the Mother of Dragons for Purim, you looked amazing!

MADONNA: Thank you.

EDGE: Do you watch "Game of Thrones?"

MADONNA: Of course. It's a family ritual. Besides "Game of Thrones," which I watch with my kids -- we all watch it together -- it's like a family bonding thing. The only other TV series I watch are "True Detective" and an Irish series called "The Fall."

ROUNDTABLE # 1: I wanted to ask you about Vene Vidi Vici -- somebody talked about referencing your earlier work. Was it a trip down memory lane for you, or were you trying to make a statement of moving past some of those places where you were in the past, and are in a different place now?

MADONNA: It was a trip down memory lane. To be honest, to be in this business for over 3 decades is -- I don't actually think about it that much. But a lot of the people that I worked with were asking me so many questions, like, What was it like -- What was Keith Haring like? What was this person like? What was that person like? In a way, sometimes, I think I underestimate what I've been through, and what I've witnessed, and I think it was just important to do that.

ROUNDTABLE # 2: At this stage in your career, what still frightens you?

MADONNA: Ignorance.

ROUNDTABLE # 3: Do your kids have a favorite song of yours?

MADONNA: They really love "Bitch, I'm Madonna." [GROUP LAUGHS] That's my teenagers' favorite song. My son David's favorite song -- he plays guitar -- and he likes "Devil Pray," that's his favorite.

EDGE: With Truth or Dare, you kind of revolutionized reality TV. Any regrets about that?

MADONNA: No, I don't regret doing Truth or Dare. I guess people show what they want to show. What kind of life you are leading.

[AS THE INTERVIEW ENDS, LIZ PROCEEDS TO CALL IN ASSISTANTS FOR PHOTO SHOOT.]

MADONNA: Should we stand up on the stage?

[MADONNA GETS MAKEUP TOUCHED UP]

LIZ: [TO ROUNDTABLE] You guys are not getting touched up, I'm just telling you.

And thus ends an evening with Madonna, and one that will certainly live in infamy for at least six gay journalists living for love in New York City.

Matt Kalkhoff is a New York-based freelance writer whose love for dance music is only surpassed by the depth and passion with which he writes about it. A full collection of Matt's work can be viewed at his website :: <http://www.mattunleashed.com>

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