

CPYU 3(D) REVIEW

Song/Video: "Bad Romance" by Lady Gaga

By Walt Mueller

Background/summary: This is the first video release from Lady Gaga's album, "The Fame Monster" (released in November 2009). The single peaked at #2 on the singles charts, and the video garnered the coveted Video of the Year award at the 2010 MTV Video Music Awards Show. The song is noteworthy not only because of the artist's widespread appeal among fans of all ages, but because of its selection as the Video of the Year.

Discover: What is the message/worldview?:

- In typical Lady Gaga fashion, the song's video treatment tells a complex and multi-layered story that contains some very obvious plots and messages, along with deeper and more confusing symbolism and/or randomness that might only be understood by the artist herself.
- The story opens in the sterile and scant setting of the Bath Haus of Gaga, where several females – including Lady Gaga – emerge from sensory deprivation pods where they've been incubating in preparation for the moment that's about to arrive. The pod holding Lady Gaga features a cross and the word "Monster."
- On a lyrical level, the song is simple and straightforward repetitive dance/pop number about romantic attraction. Gaga chants a list of wants, including a desire for "your ugly," "your disease," "your everything," "your love," "your drama," "the touch of your hand," "your leather studded kiss in the sand," "your revenge," and ultimately "your bad romance." What she doesn't want is to be friends. The attraction is purely carnal.
- On a visual level, the story unfolds as a group of supermodels force the recently emerged Lady Gaga into a bath (which she says symbolizes a washing of her sins). They force her to drink vodka in preparation to auction her off to competing male bidders from the Russian mafia, who are dressed in a variety of S&M type apparel. The supermodels present the singing and dancing Lady Gaga to the bidders in a variety of skimpy, sexual, and leave-nothing-to-the-imagination outfits.
- Lady Gaga is sold to the highest bidder, who waits for her on a bed. As Lady Gaga sings in the foreground, the bed is consumed by fire. The last scene in the video features Lady Gaga reclining on the burned bed next to the charred remains of the high bidder. A disheveled Lady Gaga looks at the camera while smoking a cigarette, her conical bra shooting out sparks that were obviously the source of the bed-burning blaze.

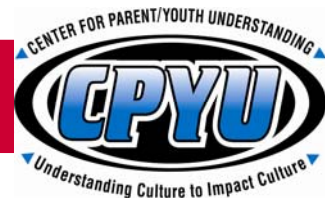
Discern: How does it stand in light of the biblical message/worldview?

- In real life and in her music, Lady Gaga consistently promotes the image of "the sovereign self." The message that one is in control of one's own life and destiny plays well in a postmodern world that has little or no room for the sovereign, transcendent, and omnipotent God of the Bible. The Scriptures are clear. There is only one God. Our calling is to place no other gods before Him, including the idol of self. We are to love, glorify and serve the one true God through faithful and obedient living.



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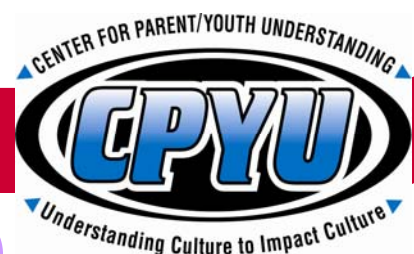


- Sexual trafficking is a growing reality that objectifies and destroys its victims. Lady Gaga should be applauded for raising awareness of this growing scourge.
- Lyrically, the song equates love with physical/sexual encounters void of marital commitment. “I want your love” and “I don’t wanna be friends” are obvious contradictions when love and the physical expression of love are understood biblically. This reflection of our societal/cultural beliefs shows just how far we have moved away from living the way and the will of the Creator in terms of our sexuality and relationships.
- A “bad romance” is not the type of relationship that glorifies and pleases God. Those who find themselves in bad relationships should get help, or get out and move on. Married couples who have vowed their commitment to each other and who find themselves in a difficult relationship should prayerfully seek to reconcile, heal, and see their relationship redeemed by God. To go so far as to seek out a “bad romance” (“I want it bad, a bad romance”) is wrong.

Decide: What do I do with it?

- At first glance, many Christians will see Lady Gaga’s “Bad Romance” as something to shut off, walk away from, and ignore. But that would be a wrong approach. While the video’s entertainment value is deeply suspect, this is a cultural piece that deserves careful attention for several reasons. Lady Gaga is currently the most popular and influential pop star on the international music scene, and she has developed a loyal fan base made up of people of all ages, including professing Christians.
- Careful viewing and deconstruction of this video with youth workers, parents, and others who know and love kids will yield deep insights into the powerful influence of popular culture, along with an understanding of the values, attitudes, and behaviors embraced by the emerging generations. Careful viewing can shape our teaching on a variety of topics, including love, sexuality, the value of persons, objectification of females, sexual/gender roles, evil, and the problem of sexual trafficking.
- Like it or not, the great majority of our students have heard the song, seen the video, tapped their feet to its catchy beats, and embraced the message. This holds true for a large number of our church-going and professing Christian kids. This reality should light a fire under our desire to not only teach students how to think critically and Christianly about media, but should spark our ministry strategizing for how to teach and instill a compelling, integrated, and consistent faith in the God who has called us to be His own.
- Youth workers and parents should *only* employ “Bad Romance” as a discussion starter with their teens if their teens have already seen and are familiar with the video. Use it to help them discern the influence of media, to understand how they and their peers are being taught to think and live, and to lead them to examine and apply Scriptural truth to prevailing cultural standards.

Dr. Walt Mueller is the president of the Center for Parent/Youth Understanding.



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