

# VMA HANGOVER... THOUGHTS THE MORNING AFTER...

*By Walt Mueller*

## Trend Alert: VMA Hangover

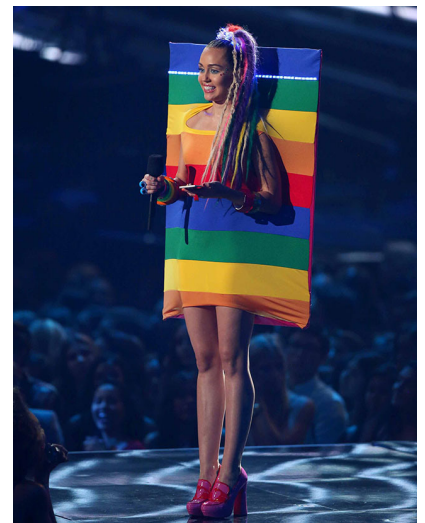
*Reflections from Walt Mueller written the morning of August 31, 2015*

**We drill it home all the time here at CPYU. . . Culture is a *map* and a *mirror*.** As a map, it guides us through life. . . telling us what to believe and how to live in the world. As a mirror, it reflects back to us things that we might pass over, ignore, or otherwise miss. While it's much more complex than this, youth culture in its most basic sense maps out life for our kids. For those of us who are adults, it helps us see the maps our kids are following so that we can offer biblical affirmation or correctives where needed.

And then there was last night's MTV Video Music Awards. . . a map taking our kids right into the midst of a massive moral, ethical, spiritual, and lifestyle train wreck.

I watched from start to finish. I took notes. I went to bed. . . and could hardly sleep. This morning, I'm trying to gather and record my thoughts. . . and I'm not sure where to begin, what to say in the middle, or how to bring it all to a conclusion. I've watched since the first VMAs aired in 1984. Since then, the envelope has stretched far beyond whatever one could think or imagine. Last night, it stretched so far that I wonder how close we are to our cultural snapping point. A couple of hours into the show I posted these words on Facebook: *"I don't think it's a matter of my age. Rather, I think it's the accelerated rate of cultural change. Tonight's VMAs are an example of how our celebration and embracing of brokenness is increasing. Sadly, most will watch and enjoy as it's all been normalized. Many will watch and learn. . . then emulate. It is more over the top than ever. I feel grief. . . and a sense of urgency regarding telling kids the truth. . ."*

So as my head spins this morning and while it will take a significant amount of time for me to think/discuss it all through to the point of making some kind of sense out of the non-stop three-ring morally-chaotic-circus that was last night's VMAs, here are some initial dis-jointed thoughts. . .



**The MTV Video  
Music Awards...  
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- We have been made to worship. In the Garden, we worshiped the One who made us. When it all came undone (Genesis 3:6), our worship continued. . . except now we invest our time, thoughts, money, energy, and allegiance into worshiping all kinds of created things. It continues today. If you were to ask me what it is we as a culture worship based on what I saw last night, we continue to divinize what the Scriptures call the world, the flesh, and the devil.
- The show's host, Miley Cyrus, continues to speak, sing, dress, and do just about anything and everything to breakdown and redefine our parameters for decency and civility. Last night, Cyrus offered up an in-your-face barrage of bravado, profanity, breast-flashing, boasting, and border-less sexuality that is redefining what it means to be human, to flourish, and to be a woman. The show was centered from start to finish on Cyrus. I was reminded of a piece I wrote on "How To Make A Pop Star" several years ago. Cyrus has lived up to and beyond the formula I wrote about back then. . . offering our vulnerable and impressionable young kids a powerful, life and attitude-shaping example.
- Narcissism is the order of the day. We care about, worship, and serve ourselves. As a result, the on-stage public bickering between pop icons is no surprise. Nicki Minaj calls out Miley Cyrus.

***During his speech, Kanye West offered up a first-hand glance at how the postmodern worldview has taken root, grown, and is now bearing pragmatic fruit in how we think and act.***

Kanye West rambles on and on after receiving his Video Vanguard Award. His self-centered ramblings followed a sustained ovation which, at one point, included the crowd chanting "Yeezus! Yeezus! Yeezus!" (Sounded eerily like "Jesus"... and the title of his 2013 album... also a reference to West calling himself "Jesus"). Even Big Sean, when receiving his award for Video With A Social Message ("One Man Can Change The World") bragged up how *he* is doing good through his foundation.

- We love our marijuana. Kanye West told the crowd that his ramblings were fueled and shaped by smoking pot before the show. Miley Cyrus asked some friends to join her to take a selfie and told them all to scream "Marijuana!" in place of "Cheese!" Miley's final song, "Dooo It!" featured Cyrus singing with The Flaming Lips, "Yeah I smoke pot, yeah I love peace/But I don't give a f\_\_\_\_, I ain't no hippie. . ." It's clear that our attitudes on mind-altering drugs are quickly changing. Perhaps life is so unfulfilling that our need to escape the realities of our chosen meaningless existence are increasing.
- During his speech, Kanye West offered up a first-hand glance at how the postmodern worldview that we began talking about twenty years ago has taken root, grown, and is now bearing pragmatic fruit in how we think and act. West basically said, "Hey. . . we're Millennials. . . we can do and say whatever we want." What our kids are losing. . . very quickly. . . is an inheritance of history, legacy, and wisdom from prior generations. On a side note, we are seeing this reality lived out more and more in the church.



***The MTV VMAs displayed a hyper-sexuality void of borders and boundaries. It's a narcissistic me-first kind of sexuality that takes God's good gift and totally drains it of any kind of God-glorifying indulgence.***

- Dis-integration. In other words, the long-running trend in the music world to talk about faith without living that faith. . . well, it continues. Exhibit A from last night's VMAs: Nicki Minaj thanking her Pastor when receiving her Best Hip-Hop Video Award for "Anaconda." It's not just happening with pop icons. We are seeing it in the church and our own lives.
- Hyper-sexuality void of borders and boundaries in terms of both our sexual practices and sexual identity choices. Anything is an option. It's a narcissistic me-first kind of sexuality that takes God's good gift and totally drains it of any kind of God-glorifying indulgence. Rather, we indulge our sexuality however we desire and please. It was there from start to finish last night. Some examples. . . Demi Lovato's steamy live performance of "'Cool For the Summer" with Iggy Azalea. . . mentions and celebrations of the SCOTUS decision. . . Cyrus's final performance being introduced by a parade of transgendered, etc. folks from her Happy Hippie Foundation. . . her actual performance of "Dooo It!" featuring a stage full of dancing drag queens. . . and Taylor Swift's steamy new video for "Wildest Dreams" along with these words she uttered when receiving her "Video

of the Year" award: "I'm just happy that in 2015 we live a world where boys can play princesses and girls can play soldiers."

- One striking reality last night. . . where were all the older and more mature artists who are making some of the most thoughtful music? Last night's VMAs celebrated and trumpeted the youngest the music industry has to offer. Any maturity and grounding that exists in the music industry was absent. . . both onstage and in the audience. The music industry. . . like our culture. . . has been juvenilized.

And that's just the start. there's so much more. Of course, watching the VMAs or any other cultural artifact like it should end for us in action. The map and mirror should result in marching orders. So, here's what I'm thinking about today in terms of our response. . .

- Biblical literacy is a thing of the past. . . which means, that we need to make it a priority now. God has revealed Himself, His will, and His way in His Word. . . both the Incarnate Word Jesus and the written word of the Bible. Are we making it a priority to guide ourselves and kids into an understanding of who God is, who we are, and God's plan for who we are?



- We need to be praying for our kids, for our selves, for parents, and for the culture.
- The prevailing belief is that freedom gives us the right to say and do anything I want to say and do. We need to understand how these shackles of brokenness are so deceptive. We need to embrace a lifestyle of freedom in Christ.
- We need to teach our kids principles of discernment. . . specifically worldview and media discernment. They need to be able to watch and critique from a biblical perspective.
- There is a desperate need for us to nurture the young artists among us into the responsible development and exercise of their creative gifts. Artistry in the popular music industry is rapidly disappearing. We need to equip a generation of responsible, mature, thoughtful, and excellent culture-makers.
- By the end of the show, I posted this little message on Facebook: *"The Miley Cyrus finale on the VMAs. . . Romans 1:16-32 just came to life for me in ways that it never has before. Praying for a generation tonight. . ."* Sad.



- I went to bed reminding myself of these words from the Psalmist that bring great comfort: "When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?" The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord is on his heavenly throne" (Psalm 11:3&4). Awesome!

Again, I apologize for the disjointedness of my thoughts and comments. For those of you who can venture into this year's VMAs, it's all online for you to watch. Do so prayerfully.

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For more information on today's youth culture, visit the website of the Center for Parent/Youth Understanding at [www.cpyu.org](http://www.cpyu.org).

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