

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Missy Elliott: It Takes a Woman

Marcia Alesan Dawkins · Tuesday, October 22nd, 2013

Mr. Van Toffler, President of Viacom Media Networks Music & Logo Group, has succeeded in making MTV the preeminent entertainment destination for the most sought-after demographic: 12- to 29-year-olds. The [Video Music Awards](#) (VMAs) play a large role in validating the demographic's tastes. At its best, the show is a celebration of artists whose creative and culturally relevant storytelling has earned them a loyal following. The best of the best receive the show's highest honor, the Michael Jackson Video Vanguard Award (also known as the Lifetime Achievement Award), because the music and videos they've made represent seismic shifts in MTV culture.

While the roster of award winners is a venerable who's who of pop culture talent, including this year's winner Justin Timberlake and past recipients like The Beatles, Peter Dinklage, Red Hot Chili Peppers, and Michael Jackson, MTV has come under fire for not honoring many of hip hop's cultural innovators such as Run-D.M.C., 2Pac, Eminem and Missy (Misdemeanor) Elliott.

With any luck all that's about to change. Here are the top five reasons why Missy Elliott should be next year's Video Vanguard Award-Winner.

1. It's time for gender equity. In the history of the award only three women have been honored – Madonna (1986), Janet Jackson (1990), Britney Spears (2011) – and none of these have been rappers. Like other female recipients Missy disrupted music video traditions by crafting some of the most creative and memorable music videos of the 1990s and 2000s.
2. The definition of “vanguard.” Missy is “the leading part of an advancing formation.” Her unique visual presentations actually make viewers see sound, consistently challenging MTV's stylistic boundaries and leading the way to new directions. Her collaborations with Hype Williams represent rap videos' mid-to-late-1990s Gilded Age and contributed to hip hop's merger with the pop mainstream, not to mention the successes of contemporary VMA royalty like Kanye West, Justin Timberlake and Macklemore.
3. Each Missy video is four minutes of unapologetic excellence. “[Lose Control](#)” and “[Work It](#)” are about a disruptive musical mindset. “[She's a B*tch](#)” and “[All N My Grill](#)” are about how to deal with patriarchy and relationship conflicts. “[One Minute Man](#),” “[Get Ur Freak On](#)” and “[I'm Really Hot](#)” show us how to be funny and creative and, somehow, sexy. “[Gossip Folks](#)” is about how to deal with celebrity. “[The Rain](#)” shows us how to transform every day household items into the coolest sci-fi fashion. And, “[Sock It 2 Me](#)” shows us how to be a superstar and stay true to your own quirkiness.
4. Blurring boundaries and honoring hip hop's roots. Her videos have deeper themes, which “flip and reverse” stereotypes from mythology, history, sociology and romance. Missy gives MTV's global audience a heroine played by a woman of color, which is exactly what many report to be looking for. That's probably why she was partying with PSY in Korea at KCOM instead of getting

this year's Video Vanguard at the VMAs.

5. Because of this petition. You can help nominate Missy Elliott for next year's Video Vanguard award by signing and sharing it with everyone you know. Let's get it going! [Click to sign the petition.](#)

If none of the above seems convincing, then the fact that Missy seems genuinely nice (and didn't ask for any of my help) might be...

[@drdawkins09](#) I really appreciate u working hard on helping them see that maybe I'm deserving of that:) I'm humbly grateful [@drdawkins09](#)!

— Missy Elliott (@MissyElliott) [August 28, 2013](#)

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