

## Nicki Minaj's Controversial Performance at Grammys

Maitlyn Healy, Staff Writer



image via mirror.co.uk

Nicki Minaj took some guidance from Lady Gaga at the 2012 Grammy Awards with her outlandish, over-the-top performance. Minaj revealed her new single, "Roman Holiday," with a Pope, a Catholic confession and an exorcism. Nicki's new song is about the possibility of an exorcism of one of her alter-egos named Roman.

There have been several attacks on Minaj's performance, calling it more like a musical and less like a performance with religious meaning. Minaj, however, is not the first artist to incorporate strong religious themes in pop culture and get criticized for it. Madonna did it with "Like a Prayer" and lost her Pepsi contract due to the controversial use of burning crosses in her music video; Kanye West did it with "Jesus Walks" and got a lot of heat when he said, "I made Jesus walk, so I'm never going to hell"; Lady Gaga did it with "Judas" and was criticized by the president of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, when he said "[Gaga] is trying to rip off Christian idolatry to shore up her talentless, mundane, and boring performances" (Powers). Because of these past instances of religious criticism in popular music, Minaj did not do anything new for pop culture by incorporating Catholic themes into her song.

*"Are artists going too far with these religious incorporations and is it harming the ideas and beliefs of their fans?"*

The question to ask after being bombarded by so many religious

themes in music is: Are artists going too far with these religious incorporations and is it harming the ideas and beliefs of their fans? Dr. Steven Benko, a religious and ethical studies professor, does not think so. "I think the artists do it to elevate their music by having it associated with something more sacred than pop music and I think the audience enjoys it because they see it as transgressive and powerful," says Benko. In terms of Minaj's performance, Dr. Benko believes that "there is nothing in the performance that denies any of the elements that define the Catholic faith. More than anything, she might be lowering the esteem of the church and the people who occupy the roles portrayed by her dancers by utilizing the meaning we associate with them in order to create a spectacle during an awards show." When asked if there is anything fans should be wary of with these religious themes in pop culture, Benko remarked, "As long as religions are deliberately using pop culture to sell religion (Christian rock, fiction, movies, etc.), it is a fair use of religion. The only thing I would be wary of, and this would go for any example of religion in culture, is when the artists are theologically ignorant and are assumed to know what they are talking about. That makes my job harder."

Artists will continue to use religious themes in their work, and, as long as fans do not base their beliefs on these lyrics, performances, and music videos, it is safe to say that artists are using these themes simply to stand out without causing any real harm to our society.

## Rebecca Rants on Birds of Paradise

Rebecca Brodney, Staff Writer

If at any point during the day you must ask yourself, "Is there a dead bird in that girl's hair?" something must be awry. The latest hair trend, known as "feathering," is a thin line to walk. If you have one to three feathers, you're trendy. If you have more than that, you are at risk of flying away if you make any sudden movements with your arms or being called by a farmer who demands you return his rooster.

We are a society filled with hair trends that are characteristic of each decade and viewed in a positive or negative light. After all, hair hindsight is 20/20. Perhaps we have heard from our parents about the 1960s sprayed bob (the ozone layer will never recover), the big flip, or Twiggy's iconic plastering of her hair to her head. The 1970s are remembered by Carol Brady's shag and Cher's stick straight hair (bear in mind, they didn't have a Chi flat-iron then, so they had to use a REAL iron). The 1980s were a particularly bad decade for hair because of the introduction of hair gels, waxes, and mousses, ideal for creating Mohawks, crimps, and mullets (clearly this trend was instigated by "hair" bands on drugs). A familiar era to most of us, the 1990s, brought the beloved messy bun as well as highlights and widespread use of bleach and blond hair dye (because nothing says "I'm hip" like a nice pint of bleach seeping into your scalp). The 21st century introduced side swept bangs and tousled, I-just-rolled-out-of-bed-but-not-really chic hair. Oh yeah, and feathers.

*"Feathers are great only in moderation. Too many may not clog your arteries or tip the scale, but you will run the risk of looking like a bird of paradise-rooster hybrid."*

Feathering is, admittedly, an appealing trend. The feathers come in every hue and last for about a month. In addition, it is a quick and an easy way to change your look without doing anything permanent or drastic. At about \$25 dollars for the first feather and \$5-10 for subsequent feathers, you won't have to take too much from your Meredith College t-shirt fund. Best of all, the feathers are quite durable. Hair can be washed, brushed, blow-dried, straightened and curled. Be warned, however: Like cake, ice cream or Cookout, feathers are great only in moderation. Too many may not clog your arteries or tip the scale, but you will run the risk of looking like a bird of paradise-rooster hybrid. To avoid this fate, use your common sense. For example, if neon pink feathers are being purchased, buy one or two. Not 200. On the other hand, if a brunette is interested in some caramel colored feathers, more is okay (but use discretion).

Celebrities like Steven Tyler, Miley Cyrus, Selena Gomez, Kesha and Heidi Klum have fallen victim to this trend. There are even dogs at the receiving end of it, which is sure to please PETA. When dealing with feathers, we must all bear in mind that when we look at pictures of ourselves in 20-30 years and we see feathers sticking out of our heads, we will mentally slap ourselves, just like the generation before us is doing now when they look at their own.

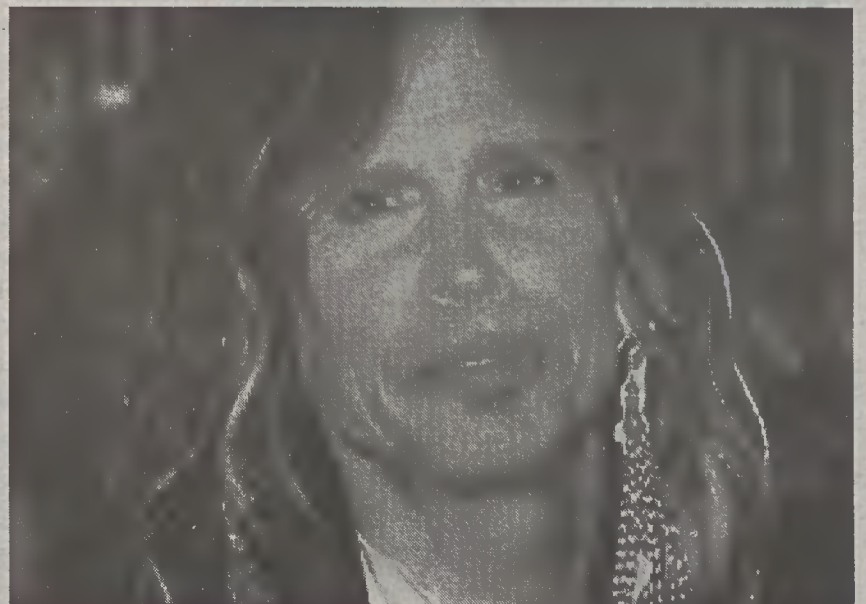


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