

# REGISTER OF CLASSIFICATION DECISIONS

Date of entry in Register: 20 September 1999  
Name of applicant/court: Secretary for Internal Affairs  
Applicant to the Labelling Body: Not Applicable  
Title of Publication: Eminem  
Other Known Titles: Eminem: The Slim Shady LP;  
The Slim Shady LP  
Director: Not Applicable  
Producer: Not Applicable  
Publisher: Not Applicable  
Author: Not Applicable  
Format: Compact Disc Sound Recording  
Country of Origin: USA  
Language: English

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**Components of film originally examined:** Not Applicable.

Feature: Running time:  
Trailers: Running time:  
Total Running time:

Excision/Alteration: Not Applicable.

Reason(s) for Excision:

Not Applicable.

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Classification Decision:

Objectionable except if the availability of the publication is restricted to persons who have attained the age of 18 years.

Display Conditions:

Nil.

Descriptive Note:

Not Applicable.

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Direction to issue a label has been given on: Not Applicable.

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**SUMMARY OF THE REASONS FOR DECISION:**

The compact disc sound recording *Eminem* (also known as *Eminem: The Slim Shady LP*) is classified as:

Objectionable except if the availability of the publication is restricted to persons who have attained the age of 18 years.

*Eminem* contains fifteen tracks in hip-hop or rap style and five short pieces of additional material, including a mock "public service announcement" disavowing responsibility for listeners' actions. The material is written and performed mainly by Eminem (Michael Mathers) and produced by Dr. Dre. The lyrics contain satirical tales of mayhem and nihilistic gloom, delivered in a mocking, ironic tone. Their subject matter is the exploits of Eminem's alter ego, Slim Shady, and they are often a response, in over-the-top style, to the personal experiences of Mathers himself. The recording assumes an audience familiar with popular culture, with many tracks referencing or parodying other music, movies and television, or well-known media personalities.

Misogynistic language and attitudes, sexual slang, and other highly offensive terms pervade the recording. There are numerous references to a variety of drugs, and although some anti-abuse messages are included, the overall result is to portray drug use as an accepted part of the hip-hop lifestyle. The lyrics contain many descriptions of graphic violence, ranging from obvious parody to lines that express a personal rage at figures in Mathers's own life. These violent fantasies often target women and include sexual violence. Of particular concern is a track where Shady and his "conscience" debate the prospect of the drug-induced seduction of a fifteen year-old girl. However, the scenario deals with the moral dilemmas involved in this sexually exploitative scenario in such a manner that the publication does not promote or support, or tend to promote or support, the exploitation of young persons for sexual purposes, or the use of coercion to compel a person to participate in, or submit to, sexual conduct.

Consideration has been given to whether *Eminem's* tales of violent murder, rape and drug use, and the misogynistic and nihilistic attitudes expressed, contribute to criminal acts such as drug use, violent or self-destructive behaviour, or to the likelihood of sexual violence directed against women. The research examined is inconclusive. However, sufficient concern exists over the role of music in teenage culture and the influence of material such as *Eminem* on impressionable young people to suggest that a limitation on the availability of the recording is required. The dominant effect of the material is ambiguous. *Eminem* pushes at the limits of acceptability. It is both offensive and transgressive, but it is also clever, inventive, satirical and humorous. It has undoubted artistic merit. Its intent and purpose is to articulate the anger, violence and frustrated apathy of certain sections of white urban youth. The context is American but the misogynistic and nihilistic attitudes expressed may appeal to vulnerable young New Zealanders. Without some recognition of *Eminem's* irony and playful mocking humour, the possibility exists that the recording would encourage a group that is already at risk to express these attitudes in violent or self-destructive behaviour. It is further noted that one of the stronger conclusions of the research examined is the statement that misogynistic rap may lead to the establishment or reinforcement of negative attitudes towards women.

The classification limits the availability of the recording to adults, who are more likely to have the wider experience required to put the material into a perspective that takes account of its artistic merit and value as social commentary, and less likely to take up, unmediated, its violent, misogynistic and nihilistic messages. The right to the freedom of expression set out in s14 of the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 has been considered. The Classification Office is aware that the classification limits the right of teenagers to enjoy the music of their choice. However, this consideration has been weighed against the likelihood of injury to the public good should the publication be available to this younger age group. The classification imposed on the publication is reasonable, no more than is necessary to prevent injury to the public good, and is consistent with Parliament's intention to restrict publications whose availability is likely to create such injury.

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