

*So Addictive* (2001, Elektra); *Under Construction* (2002, Elektra).

WEBSITE: [www.missy-elliott.com](http://www.missy-elliott.com).

SEAN CAMERON

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## EMERSON STRING QUARTET

**Formed:** 1976, New York

**Members:** Eugene Drucker, violin (born Coral Gables, Florida, 17 May 1952); Lawrence Dutton, viola (born New York, New York, 9 May 1954); David Finckel, cello (born Allentown, Pennsylvania, 6 December 1951); Philip Setzer, violin (Cuyahoga County, Ohio, 12 March 1951). Former members: Guillermo Figueroa, viola; Eric Wilson, cello.

**Genre:** Classical

Known for its penetrating interpretations, technical brilliance, and dynamic sound, the Emerson String Quartet is considered by many to be the world's finest string quartet. Its performances and recordings of the Beethoven, Bartók, and Shostakovich quartet cycles are highly prized, and the quartet has a long history of promoting music of contemporary composers.

Named for American poet and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, the quartet was founded in 1976 while violinists Eugene Drucker, Philip Setzer, violist Guillermo Figueroa, and cellist Eric Wilson were students at the Juilliard School. Unlike most quartets, the Emerson has no first and second violins; Setzer and Drucker trade off playing first and second parts from work to work. This helps keep the music fresh and encourages the players to listen and adapt to one another.

In 1977 violist Lawrence Dutton joined the quartet, and the next year the group won the prestigious Naumburg Award for Chamber Music, launching its international career. Cellist David Finckel joined the quartet in 1978, and the Emersons's current lineup was set. That year the quartet played the first of its annual season of recitals at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

Since then it has worked with some of the world's most prominent musicians, including Menahem Pressler, Mstislav Rostropovich, Isaac Stern, Thomas Hampson, Leon Fleisher, Emanuel Ax, Oscar Shumsky, and Misha Dichter. The quartet has commissioned or premiered work by Edgar Meyer, Ned Rorem, John Harbison, Mario Daviodovsky, and Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, among others.

The Emerson Quartet tours relentlessly, giving annual tours at many of the world's most prestigious concert venues and music festivals. The group is also highly committed to teaching and offers master classes in con-

junction with its concerts in many of the cities in which it performs. In 1981 it began teaching at the Hartt School in Hartford, Connecticut, and in 2002 it became quartet-in-residence at the State University of New York, Stony Brook. The Emerson Quartet frequently gives concerts to benefit peace, world hunger, children, the fight against AIDS, and other causes.

The Emerson Quartet has won six Grammy Awards, including two for the *Bartók String Quartets* (1990); one for *American Originals* (1994), featuring music by John Harbison, Richard Wernick, and Gunther Schuller; another for a set of the complete *Beethoven String Quartets* (1998); and two more (Best Chamber Music Performance and Best Classical Album) for the complete *Shostakovich String Quartets* (2000). The Shostakovich set, recorded live over three summers at the Aspen Music Festival, also won *Gramophone* magazine's Record of the Year honors. In 2000 the Emerson Quartet were chosen as *Musical America's* Ensemble of the Year.

Two films have been made about the Emerson Quartet: *In Residence at the Renwick* (1983), produced for public television, which won an Emmy; and *Making Music: The Emerson Quartet*, which won first prize at the National Educational Film Festival (1985).

The 1980s saw a boom in chamber music across America, with hundreds of chamber groups and series springing up. In the 1990s the field contracted considerably, but the Emerson Quartet continued to thrive, building on its claim as one of the top chamber ensembles in the world. Its restless exploration of new repertoire and a seemingly natural affinity for the core of the string quartet literature continue to reinvigorate the quartet's performances. The individuality encouraged in each of the members contributes to the freshness of the quartet's interpretations and its ability to produce highly nuanced performances.

**SELECTIVE DISCOGRAPHY:** *Bartók String Quartets* (Deutsche Grammophon, 1990); *American Originals* (Deutsche Grammophon, 1994); *Beethoven String Quartets* (Deutsche Grammophon, 1998); *Shostakovich String Quartets* (Deutsche Grammophon, 2000).

WEBSITE: [www.emersonquartet.com](http://www.emersonquartet.com).

DOUGLAS MCLENNAN

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## EMINEM

**Born:** Marshall Bruce Mathers III; Kansas City, Missouri, 17 October 1974

**Genre:** Rap

**Best-selling album since 1990:** *The Eminem Show* (2002)

**Hit songs since 1990:** "The Real Slim Shady," "My Name Is," "Without Me"



Eminem [AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS]

A number of rap artists were both controversial and commercially successful throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s. None, however, were as controversial or as successful as Detroit's Marshall Mathers, a.k.a. Eminem. A brash lyricist unafraid to explore and expose his conflicted psyche, Eminem blended elements of explicit humor, misogyny, self-doubt, violence, rage, and homophobia into an undeniably catchy, million-selling formula. Along the way, the bleach-blonde, white rapper went from social pariah to Grammy and Oscar-nominated mainstream music star, actor, and producer.

### Breaking Through

Marshall Mathers III was born in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1974 and was raised by his mother, Debbie Mathers-Briggs, who later became fodder for some of his harshest songs. An outcast whose transient lifestyle had made it difficult to make friends, Mathers immersed himself in the cadences of hip-hop, gaining respect for his rhyming skills even as he was flunking out of ninth grade because of his poor attendance record.

The budding rapper worked with a number of local rap crews (Basement Productions, the New Jacks, Sole

Intent), going solo in 1997 with the poorly received *Infinite* album, released through the local FBT Productions label. Though he was ignored on his local scene, the rapper began to gain notice for his skills at freestyle battling—a method of rapping that involves the spontaneous creation of lyrics during a “battle” with another rapper in which each tries to top the other's lyrics with creative insults and rhymes. His notoriety expanded with a second place finish in *Rap Sheet* magazine's 1997 freestyle competition, the “Rap Olympics.”

The famed rapper/producer Dr. Dre caught wind of Mathers, rapping as his alter ego, Eminem, and was sufficiently impressed by Eminem's mini album, *The Slim Shady EP* (1997), that he signed him to his Aftermath Entertainment label. By now Mathers had created two distinct characters for his rapping, Eminem and Slim Shady, both of them laced with a dark, often violent and anti-social edge.

Dre famously commented that he did not know or care that the rapper was white, only that he had considerable skills. Rappers had been engaging in violent, misogynist street reportage for more than a decade, but Eminem's resulting album, *The Slim Shady LP*, arrived amidst a firestorm of controversy about its lyrical content.

With songs depicting date rape (“Guilty Conscience”), drug use, violence toward women (“Role Model”), and the murder of his daughter's mother (“’97 Bonnie & Clyde”), the album drew fire for its content, while some critics praised Eminem for his willingness to express his rage, disillusionment, and frustration amid the chaos of his life. In a famous essay late *Billboard* magazine editor-in-chief Timothy White targeted Eminem and his label for “exploiting the world's misery.” Though mostly dismissive of the criticism, Mathers claimed in some interviews that he was simply voicing the deviant thoughts of his characters.

### Fame, Fortune, and Litigation

The album also raised the ire of Eminem's estranged mother, who filed a \$10 million defamation suit in September 1999 against her son for portraying her as a “law-suit-happy” drug abuser. Though he won a Best New Artist award at MTV's Video Music Awards in September 1999 and that summer married his on-and-off again sweetheart, Kim, the mother of his daughter, the good times did not last. In June 2000 Eminem pleaded not guilty to felony assault charges stemming from a Michigan bar brawl. A month later Kim Mathers attempted suicide and soon filed for divorce.

Following the example of Eminem's mother, his estranged wife filed a \$10 million defamation suit against the rapper. In another example of his turbulent home life, Eminem and Kim withdrew their divorce petition in

Spot  
Light

## The Slim Shady LP

Eminem was introduced to the world with the humorous single, "My Name Is," a nasal, comedic performance in which the rapper feigned violence on himself, expressed an interest in impregnating a Spice Girl, and joked about overdosing on drugs. Despite the explicit content, the song from *The Slim Shady LP* was a huge hit but hardly indicative of the rest of the album's content. "Guilty Conscience" featured jokes about robbing convenience stores and date-raping underage girls, couched in terms of conflicted sociopaths whose good and evil sides are at war. Even though women's groups lambasted the rapper for the violence of songs such as "'97 Bonnie & Clyde" (the album's cover featured an image from that song in which a woman's feet protrude from the trunk of a car as Eminem and his daughter peer over a dock), others were impressed by the self-deprecating nature of tracks such as "Rock Bottom," in which Eminem raps about being so poor he does not know how he will afford diapers for his daughter, Hailie. With classic production from his mentor, Dr. Dre, on the album's two singles, *The Slim Shady LP* introduced a stirring new lyrical voice.

December 2000, only to file divorce papers again in March 2001.

Amid the chaos, Eminem released his second album, *The Marshall Mathers LP* (2000), which debuted at number one on the *Billboard* charts and garnered three Grammy nominations. If his debut caused controversy, Eminem's second album poured gasoline on the fire. Musically ambitious and lyrically sophisticated, songs such as "Kill You" ("Slut, think I won't choke no whore until the vocal cords won't work no more?") and "Kim" were laced with bilious lyrics aimed at women and homosexuals, with the threats delivered in a sometimes comical, often angry voice. Women's groups and gay rights groups picketed and spoke out against the rapper, protesting his lyrics.

A groundswell of critical praise for Eminem began to gel around songs such as "Stan," a touching, eerie story/song about an obsessed fan set to the haunting,

acoustic strains sampled from a soulful ballad by singer Dido. A commentary on the perils of fame and the danger of hero worship, the song paints a wholly different picture of Eminem: the sensitive artist spooked by the lengths his fans will go to emulate him. Amid furious protests from gay activists, Eminem performed "Stan" on the 2001 Grammy telecast as a duet with the openly gay singer Elton John; they ended the song with a warm embrace. The rapper won the second of three consecutive rap album of the year awards during the broadcast.

After releasing an album with his Detroit posse, D12, *Devil's Night*, Eminem recorded his third album, *The Eminem Show*, which debuted at number one in May 2002. Taking a stronger hand in the production of his songs, Eminem shows a musical dexterity on the album, mixing in elements of classic rock and pop while retaining his me-against-the-world posture on songs such as "White America" and the album's smash single, "Without Me." Still relying on his tortured personal life for inspiration ("Cleaning out My Closet"), Eminem again drew praise from critics for his lyrical prowess and musical creativity.

The soundtrack to his well-received big screen acting debut, the loosely autobiographical *8 Mile*, was also a smash hit, selling more than 5 million copies and launching the biggest single of his career, "Lose Yourself," a gripping story about the struggle to make it in the rap world.

Vilified, protested, and wildly praised, Eminem has undeniably been one of the most riveting forces in contemporary popular music. With his everyman persona, his unchecked id, and his poetic writing skills, he gained respect from both the underground rap world and the mainstream media.

**SELECTIVE DISCOGRAPHY:** *Infinite* (FBT Productions, 1996); *The Slim Shady EP* (Web, 1997); *The Slim Shady LP* (Interscope/Aftermath, 1999); *The Marshall Mathers LP* (Interscope/Aftermath, 2000); *The Eminem Show* (Interscope/Aftermath, 2002).

**SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY:** *8 Mile* (2002).

GIL KAUFMAN

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**EN VOGUE**

**Formed:** 1988, Oakland, California

**Members:** Amanda Cole (born Mississippi, 6 January 1974); Terry Ellis (born Houston, Texas, 5 September 1966); Cindy Herron (born San Francisco, California, 26 September 1965). Former members: Maxine Jones (born Paterson, New Jersey, 16 January 1965); Dawn Robinson (born New London, Connecticut, 28 November 1968).

**Genre:** R&B, Pop