

youth-oriented marketing. What about adult marketing? My mother can't go out and buy anything; there's nothing to buy."

"Basically, what they've done with hip-hop artists and Black music in general is pay a little, gain a lot. You can't blame the artist, because the artists are so young and it's easy to be pimped when you don't know anything about the business," she said. Me'Shell bravely asserts that while she needs money, just like everyone else, she isn't propelled by it. "If I didn't have a record deal, I'd still make music, but it isn't the end-all-be-all," she says.

Content, says the singer, is a whole other complex, conflict-strewn issue. "Hip-hop is a great, great thing that happened to the music industry; it's also a detriment," she says. After seeing Nas, RZA, Wyclef and Mase on an MTV roundtable discussion, the singer said she found it very detrimental to hear young, Black men saying that people should basically be happy that they were making rap records – because the alternative could be that they were "breaking into and robbing" their houses. "What's that about?" she asked. "They make rap records about violence, which I don't consider to be among the most progressive ideas in America. It's all about making money, and then if you critique it, you're seen as a playa hater. What about educating people of color and giving other alternatives?"

Because there's no one, easy answer to the industry's shortcomings, Me'Shell concentrates on her craft. "I do my music and try to be a good person. But the hypocrisy in this world is just amazing," she says, even calling Christianity like she sees it. "The Bible says, 'Thou shalt not kill,' and then it tells David to 'slay his enemies,' so it's just a part of the way the world works. It's not OK to be gay, but if you're fornicating with the opposite sex, that's fine, your sin is less. So I just kind of look at the world and accept it for what it is, a constant contradiction: 10,000 joys, 10,000 sorrows."

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