

Madonna

2006 was the year of Her Madgesty. No, we're not talking about Kirsten Dunst snivelling around Versailles in furry Manolos in *Marie Antoinette*. We are talking about the pop music monarch that is Madonna.

SHE MAY HAVE DONNED HER VIOLET LEOTARDS BACK in 2005 to launch her disco-spritzed 10th album *Confessions on a Dance Floor*, but it wasn't until '06 that we started to realize that Mrs Ritchie - English Roses and all - was back on top.

Garnering more than \$193m, her Confessions Tour - a staged Studio 54 meets *Ab Fab* on acid affair - was, hands down, the hottest concert ticket of the summer. Replete with more spectacles (giant video montages of her equestrian-esque photo shoot for *W* magazine), scandals (dancing women in sequined burkas) and sacraments (her "Like A Prayer" crucifixion performance set on a bling-bling cross) than *Jesus Christ Superstar*, the show seized the public's interest in the way a TomKat, Fed-Ex and Brangelina love triangle would. Not to mention the OTT social messages! Erotic dance routines centred on racism, poverty, equal rights and a spirited Bush-bashing video montage (Dubya's face set to the continuous scratching of the lyrics to her hit song "Sorry": "You're not half the man you think you are"). In short, the show managed to confirm Madonna's everlasting position as outspoken cultural thermometer.

But what of the results of Madonna's theatrical excess? A groundbreaking triumph, to say the least. Confessions is the highest-grossing tour by a female artist in history, managing even to beat the farewells out of pop veteran Cher. So successful that *I'm Going To Tell You A Secret*, a live album DVD and documentary recounting her previous Re-Invention tour, was released in June 2006. Then, there's the coveted Brit Award and World Music Award and a fair sprinkle of MTV Video Music nods for her *Saturday Night Fever*-ish "Hung Up" video.

According to the 2007 Guinness World Records book, Madge also managed to trump her own prodigy, Britney Spears, by becoming the highest-paid female singer in the world. Also, Madonna's still-going-strong *Confessions* album (eight million sold so far) containing the latest bass-line heavy singles "Get Together" and "Jump" is still getting as much, if not more, chart, club and video play than X-Tina, Justin and her main source of diva competition, Gwen Stefani.

And let's not forget our favourite pop diva's inimitable knack for courting controversy. While a plethora of her '80s pop contemporaries, including George Michael, Elton John and Boy George, have made tab headlines for abusing drugs, alcohol or their own fame, Madge's charitable 'Malawi invasion' is the only thing the blog/bland media have to use against her these days. Sure, the questionably quick Madoption of a 13-month-old baby boy is, well, questionable, but she could be doing worse things with her time. (Remember the rap about lattes and Pilates?) Really, no one else has created or recreated as many trends as Madonna, and this year has proven that her talent for playing provocateur and pop queen is unmatched. **ELIO IANNACCI**

PROVOCATEUR,
OUTSPOKEN
CULTURAL
THERMOMETER
AND HIGHEST PAID
FEMALE SINGER



MADONNA
Confessions on
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