

Mary J Blige & Veronica Webb

As usual, flattery and fame have their price, and Blige is in the doubly precarious position of being expected to live up to all of this.

into gratitude. I always want a story!

VERONICA WEBB: So, is this everything that you ever wanted?

VW: But there's a lot of stuff that took you away from that, right?

VW: It sounds like that's your goal - to be happy.

VW: Well, we all have stuff that takes it away from us.

MJB: It feels very good. There ain't no bust about it.

MARY J. BLIGE: This is some bullshit. I'm happy, though. But I'd be happy either way. I got to be.

MJB: Oh definitely. To be content. To find my fight mind - peace - and do it while I'm here.

VW: So what does it feel like, Mary? Everybody wants to know, what does it feel like?

MJB: It's very hard. So no one should judge you, because it's hard for everybody. VW: You talk about violence a lot in interviews. Did you grow up with it?

VW: Oh yeah. That's real basic. What made you think about loving your neighbor?

VW: Have you ever felt like maybe it wasn't going to work, maybe you weren't going to be happy? MJB: I never thought like that. I mean, all my life, I never really thought negative about nothing. Never.

MJB: 'Cause you have to. It feels good. And it should all feel good.

VW: I do understand. What makes you think I don't?

VW: I was just thinking it through. Did you write a lot before?

MJB: Pain. Pain. I couldn't take no more, and I had to sing.

VW: Were you going through relationships? MJB: Yeah. Many relationships where I learned ...

MJB: You don't got to be hit at all now, do you?

MJB: It's hard, baby? I'm going to make it easy for you.

a respect thing. And that's my way of living. That's me. O.K.?

MJB: And you, fuckin' around trying to be Alice in Wonderland?

VW: In a lot of ways, it's freedom. I like being off the block MJB: You think it's freedom? You've got a point.

VW: No, it's not about getting on a throne and preaching.

VW: Do you have different survival skills now?

MJB: I wasn't with him for twenty-four weeks.

MJB: I have survival skills, period. VW: Did you add new ones?

MJB: Uh-uh.

VW: Why not?

VW: Really?

VW: Yup.

MJB: What?

VW· O K

life.

group of gifts like that? MJB: Yeah, that was my first time VW: What did that feel like

You/You're All I Need to Get By

MJB: Ask the question again. VW: So you were just focused on you?

VW: You know what's not freedom? Standing in the welfare office

VW: Not dealing with shit from men in relationships takes a lot of discipline

MJB: You thought that? Why? You didn't see the real shit happening in your face?

MJB: Back to reality. And reality is what we feel here. [MJB places hand over her heart]

VW: I'm trying to keep up, Mary. I'm not a drinker or a smoker. But I'm trying to keep up. Do you like the life?

MJB: But you know what? I'm going to tell you this right here. [This life] is freedom, but it's hell.

MJB: It's reality. You can't walk out of that door and think it's going to be Alice in Wonderland.

MJB: Angelo Ellerbee is the perfect example of what we need to be. He can't be fucked with.

 $\mbox{MJB: I'm}$  thinking about it. Do you know why? I would have figured it out if I was you.

VW: Why was that a stupid question? That's consistently in your press, Mary.

VW: Because you knew a lot of it already, and you learn fast.

VW: No. It takes a lot to offend me. I might be offending you. MJB: No, I'm not trying to offend you. So we need to fight

VW: Well, you're only going down once, right?

VW: Being happy. Everything comes back to

MJB: I don't watch shit. I don't watch nobody.

VW: Whatever he didn't deserve to die like that

- E-mail - orgNote - 1 Report post to moderator

MJB: Like nothing. I mean, it felt like everything living in me.

VW: Clearly, that's home base for you.

MJB: You can't restrict your mind on the business. You've got to restrict your mind on the work and how you want to live

VW: What about the etiquette course you enrolled in with Angelo Ellerbee from [the public relations firm] Double Exxposure?

MJB: It really is consistently in my press. But why do you think I went? Why do you think I went for such a short period of time?

MJB: Well, why are you asking me the question? We need to be alone, right? Because we're going to fight, ain't we?

MJB: You ain't missing nothing. It's all good. I'm trying to tell you. Everything is good. The bad is good.

VW: Right. So in that room with Latifah and Patra and everybody else, you were just listening?

VW: There's a lot of negative stuff that I don't see because I don't want to see it.

VW: Why? Because he's happy in himself? Because he knows where he comes from? Why? What did he do with you for twenty-four weeks?

MJB: That was the length of the course. [Blige attended it for seventeen weeks.] See, the more you ask me stupid questions, the more I'm going to give you stupid answers

VW: No. Why would we need to fight, Mary? Over what? [laughs] You might need to scold me a little bit, because I've got a feeling that there's something I'm missing. And that's O.K.

VW: Yeah, but I mean, you've get Patra, she's a Jamaican party girl. Then you've got Me'Shell Ndegeocello... It had to be different than watching Method Man work when you two recorded the duet "I'il Be There far

MJB: Don't see it, baby. [VW laughs] No. There's your answer to everything ... and then whatever you're going to express, that's O.K. And this tape's for you, baby. Don't worry like that to the world. You're like me, going crazy. People want to see a nigger like me locked down in jail, doing drugs. And that's just the rub of the way of the world. Like what they did to Tupac. They put him under. He didn't do a mother-fucking thing. They put Mike Tyson under. He didn't do a motherfucking thing. They tried to say Michael Jordan's father was doing drugs and gambling. But that was his business.

MJB: Don't lock me down like that. Don't chain me up like that. Don't bring me back to slavery days because I'm living my life. You're living your life when you get ready - and can't nobody fuck with you. Let me live my

MJB: Take me away, Kill me, Stab me. Shoot me. One day I know I'm gonna have to get up out of this bitch [this life], because my God won't stand for all this unfairness

MJB: You're only going down once. You don't come back. You're outta here, and then after that you're searching. So, you want to be happy searching.

MJB: Who am I watching? Can you rewind that? Veronica, I don't watch anybody. Listen, sit down. Let me tell you something for your own good.

MJB: I'm focused on the good shit in life. And the good shit in life is man and woman. So you can't watch it. You've got to feel it

VW: It sounds like you need to maintain a let of control - like you'd be regulating.

VW: You know how you watch TV as a kid, and you think that's how relationships are going to be?

VW: No. Now, I know when to duck

VW: But that's the hard way to go.

VW: I was trying to block that shit out.

VW: But you never did that as a kid?

MJB: Do you like being in this life?

MJB: What do you like about it?

VW: I'm not so sure if it's really hell.

VW: Yeah, I do.

MARCO: In the streets, all you see is reality.

MJB: I didn't write anything on my first album. There were a lot of my emotions in it.

VW: What made you want to write, because it seems like your songs are mostly about hurting?

VW: What were you trying to achieve in your relationship with your boyfriend, K-Ci, the singer in the soul band Jodeci?

a pack of cigarettes.

MJB: Like what?

MJB: What does what feel like?

VW: Mmm-hmm. It's hard.

you drink.

MJB: No. they don't.

MJB: You look like you don't.

VW: Otherwise, why be in it?

my ass off while reading it. Its very old and from what I read in Mary's recent interview I could def sense an obevious positive change. Enjoy "Proud Mary"-Interview Magazine, July 1995
WHEN WE SENT VERONICA WEBB TO GET THE 411 ON MARY J. BLIGE. THE TWO NEARLY GOT INTO A FISTFIGHT. THE TWENTY-FOUR-YEAR-OLD SINGER POSSESSES A LARGER-THAN-LIFE VOICE, THE STRENGTH AND CONVICTION TO KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH IT, AND AS WEBB FOUND OUT, AN UNFORGETTABLE, MULTIFACETED PERSONALITY. ALL OF WHICH HAS HER EDGING CLOSER AND CLOSER TO BECOMING A MEGAMUSICIAN OF MAJOR INTEREST AND MAJOR INFLUENCE

At age twenty-four, Mary J. Blige presently holds the title Queen of Hip-hop Soul. This medal flint came to Blige directly from the hip-hop community because, responding to rap, she developed a style of soul singing flowing right on top of the beats on her 1993 debut album, What's the 411? (Uptown). Since the release of her second Uptown album, My Life, last fall, she has been referred to as the "Aretha Franklin of Generation X."

I went to meet Blige at a private airplane hangar in Santa Monica, while she was shooting a \$300,000 video for the track "You Bring Me Joy," which will be the third video from My Life. Three and a half hours after my

arrival, during the dinner break, I was allowed my first encounter with Bilge. I had been warned that she is not at all political. That she is moody. That she can be attacking. When the director calls for a dinner break, I hear her cousin and traveling companion Jamarco rename it a "chronic break." True to her word, Blige and her sister LaTonya, along with Jamarco end a few beauty attendants, sit in Blige's Jeep, listening to the rapper Method Man on the car radio, passin' reefer, and drinkin' forty-ounce bottles of beer. Someone summons me to the car to introduce me to Blige. When it becomes clear to Blige that I intend to interview her that day, she is openly infuriated that she had not been briefed that I'd be doing more than just hanging out the first time we met. She's through. Windows start rolling up, the doors on Blige's Cherokee slam shut, and I awkwardly retreat to my car. I'm parked in the space next to hers. She's given me the pop star treatment: They bring you up, and they let you down.

"Keep it real" is the pledge of allegiance at Camp Blige. It isn't long before the "chronic" is in full effect and the parking lot becomes a block party. Taureen Bennett, Blige's soft-spoken six-foot-three bodyguard, stands next to the passenger side of her Jeep Cherokee and rocks the vehicle and its occupants to the beat, it looks like a ride at an urban amusement park. When Taureen works up a sweat from rocking the Jeep, he down in front of Blige's dressing trailer next to her Jeep and sips a wine cooler, Hours go by, and the party continues. Marco and LaTonya bring back Styrofoam containers of fried chicken and greens. Under the streetlights in the parking lot, Blige teaches her sister end Taureen the steps she dances in the video. It's a ghetto extravaganza.

Blige needs a pack of Newports. Sensing my total frustration, she asks me to take her to the store. The two of us go together in my car, followed by Taureen in his car. My frustration and resentment immediately turn

Sizing me up at the liquor store, Blige tells me "You need a drink, girl." Politely, I decline in favor of Gatorade. "No! Let's get a bottle of Malibu." It's not an offer - it's an order. I need to know what Malibu is. "You ain't never had no 'bu, girl? Well, you here now. "Blige picks up the Malibu and goes over to the cooler and pulls out two cans of pineapple coconut juice, asking the cashier if they're "all natural, no MSG?" Then she asks for

Taureen shadows my car back to the set. Blige invites me into her trailer on the condition that I "troop" with her through that bottle of Malibu and a few beers. She shows me many different sides of herself: pop star, spiritual leader, project princess, bitch, and good girlfriend. The overwhelming thing about Mary J. Blige is that she does exactly whet she wants to do, regardless, or maybe because of, her point of view - that she is constantly under siege in a world that's hostile to who she is. And because of that I won't forget her. She is someone who will be famous whether her story turns out to be a tragedy or a success.

MJB: Well, you know what takes it away from us? We take us away from us, when we feed into negative bullshit and shit that's going on that we are not supposed to even have anything to do with.

MJB: That's positive when it's showered on you the right way, but it's negative when you can't handle it, when you don't know what to do with it. It's good, it comes, you spend it, but don't act like an asshole. Just stay

MJB: You just got to look at it as all good. It is scary. Life is scary. Everything is scary if you look at it. So you just got to live. You got to be happy and without a care in the world. You got to be all right in your heart. Fuck the outside of you as long as that heart is clean. I mean, I know my heart is not clean, and none of our urban hearts are clean. But you can be washed again.

VW: Do you worry about people judging you? People judge you all the time. They listen to your records. They write critiques. They talk about how you dress, who you go out with, what you eat, what you smoke, what

MJB: There ain't nothing you could really say. Of course, when you're younger, you're going to ask "Why?" to a lot of things. But when you find out the answer, there's no more question. Do you believe in loving your

VW: But why did that come up? Are you living in a way that's different now because you've got a lot of neighbors? Everybody who picks up Essence and reads about you becomes your neighbor. Everybody who listens

VW: But sometimes it's not even negative bullshit. When I started modeling, I was nineteen years old, and suddenly it was like planes, money, and hotels

VW: What does it feel like to have a gift inside of you, and it's just something that you live with, and then suddenly everybody steps up and they recognize it?

VW: Your last album established you as part of the big boys' club. It had a lot of attitudes that were more masculine. My Life is more of a girl's album than your last album.

MJB: No more. Finished. I'm not dealing with this any longer now. I'm going to need nothing but natural resources. [runs hands from her forehead to her toes]

MJB: No, don't block that shit out. Block that TV shit out. You'll never block reality. Reality's in your face. Reality is the shit you can't hide from.

MJB: And people, when they hear pain, you think of pain ... and that's the bottom line. Everybody will be hurting. Listen to a baby crying, and you'll cry, you'll hurt. You know what I'm saying?

MJB: You know, me and my weaknesses ... [pulls cap off a Heineken bottle with her teeth] 'cause I'm all right. But I can fuck you up the same way you can fuck me up, too. And it ain't got to be physical

VW: No. When it's mental, it's worse, because it takes longer to figure it out. And it takes a lot longer to get over it. When somebody who you trust - who you love - starts doing that shit to you, you don't expect that. When I let somebody close to me, especially a man, and then they're critical, negative, and destructive, it used to be I had to get hit three times between my eyes to figure it out.

MJB: If I've got to die doing it, I'm out of here. 'Cause I'm not going to make an ass out of myself for the world. I'm just going to love. Love, get respect, demand it 'cause I give it. Give it 'cause I demand it, whatever. It's

MJB: The only thing I did when I was a kid as far as TV goes, was when the Chinese women [in Kung Fu movies] used to come on, I used to act like them motherfuckers and try to fuck everybody up. But that's it. The Brady Bunch? Happy ending? Get all emotional and all that shit? Go back to reality.

M: That's why most people can't understand Mary. All she sees is reality. When you've been growing up in the streets all your life and this shit hits ... it's nothing big, really. It might be big because you've got a lot of dough in your pocket at first. But once you settle down, it's just a regular job.

MJB: I don't regulate. I regulate within me. I get Mary together. I speak to Mary. 'Cause I'm no better than you, you, or you. And I can't get on no throne and preach, 'cause I'm not God.

VW: At the same time, you're a woman. And the business is net set up for women. Usually people wouldn't listen to you when you say, "I want to do this or that."

MJB: That's what I'm saying. I can't get on a throne and preach. I can't make the world sit down. And that's the bottom line. Because that's the most powerful source right here, [what] we have [within ourselves]

you, remain the same - humble and kind, a nice person. Do your thing. You demand respect and you'll get it. First of all, you give respect.

MJB: Yeah, I grew up on it - in it, on it, all of that, It's not the right way of life. But yo, it's the way of life. And it's how you go about it, too.

MJB: Well, it's like this: Ain't nothing I can do about it. So I got to live for Mary. Fuck thinking about the judging. VW: Was there a point when people first started paying attention to you where you were like, "Damn, why?"