

Another Eminem album, another debate over the coarseness of his music and the image he portrays. But with reviews mixed, album sales uncertain after a strong commercial debut, and the famously fickle tastes of the record-buying public, has the time come for a serious rebuttal to a career which has brought Eminem great fame and fortune, while exposing our young people to material which is far angrier and obscene than most parents probably realize?

In his newly published novel *Like We Care*, author Tom Matthews uses a vicious degree of satire and thinly-disguised characterizations of some of the entertainment industry's most powerful figures to expose the rot at the heart of the pop culture machine. A story of teenaged revolt, in which the book's young protagonists embrace the cause of "corporate disobedience" in order to protest their exploitation at the hands of Big Business, *Like We Care* ultimately sets its sights on a white, profane, immensely successful rapper named ScroatM.

Comparisons between Eminem and ScroatM, whose career in the book hits the skids when his desired demographic turns on him, are welcomed by Matthews.

"There is something unsettlingly seductive about the surface-level attraction of Eminem: the silly, pixilated imagery in his videos, the cartoonish voices he works into his raps, the relentless, hypnotic beat of the tracks," says Matthews. "It's not hard to see why young listeners are drawn to it. But then you listen to the hatefulness and the vulgarity of what he's actually saying, and it's indefensible that this stuff is being sold to kids. It is way overdue that someone call him on it."

Without ever arguing in favor of censorship, Matthews wants to offer the kind of parental advisory which is often lost amidst the monolithic marketing campaign which traditionally supports an artist of Eminem's stature. What sets Matthews apart from the usual pop culture nags, traditionally aligned with the conservative right and known for their utter lack of humor or irony, are two things: 1) he's a political liberal, working this past election on behalf of MoveOn; and 2) *Like We Care* is fueled by a merciless sense of satire which scores huge laughs while at the same time revealing a deep concern for the depths to which corporate America is willing to stoop in order to separate a kid from his money.

Matthews also employs some of Eminem's own tricks – satire, provocative language, and a willingness to pick a fight – to lay bare some of the industry's biggest power players. With *Like We Care*, we'll get to see if Eminem and his kind can take it as well as they can dish it out.

Tom Matthews wrote the original screenplay *Mad City*, a 1997 Warner Bros. release starring Dustin Hoffman and John Travolta, and directed by Costa-Gavras. He has also written scripts for Universal Pictures, New Line Cinema, Twentieth Century Fox, and Walt Disney Pictures, working with such producers as Steven Soderbergh (*Traffic*, *Erin Brockovich*), Steve Tisch (*Forrest Gump*), Hunt Lowry (*The Last of the Mohicans*), and Lynda Obst (*Sleepless In Seattle*).

Prior to launching his screenwriting and novel writing career, Matthews spent fifteen years working in the motion picture industry as a journalist, film critic, and publicist for Twentieth Century Fox. He's also done freelance work for national and regional publications that include *L.A. Weekly*, *Marquee Magazine*, *Milwaukee Journal*, and *Creative Screenwriting*.

Matthews was also a managing editor for *Boxoffice Magazine* for six years.

Since 1992, Baltimore-based Bancroft Press, a general interest trade publisher operating under the slogan of "books that enlighten," has published 40 books, ranging from thrillers, Hollywood novels, young adult fiction, and mysteries, on the fiction side, to non-fiction books running the gamut from humor, health, and cultural criticism, to history, business, and personal investment. It has received special recognition from *Publishers Weekly*, which calls Bancroft "small but enterprising," is consistently ranked among the nation's top 100 independent presses (it is one of the very few that concentrates on fiction), and is called "up and coming" by syndicated columnist Liz Smith. Six of Bancroft's books have been sold to mass market paperback, four to book clubs, four to the movies and television, and four to a foreign publisher.