

By **Stephanie King**

It took *Paparazzi* and a sensational MTV Video Music Awards [performance](#) to convince me that Lady Gaga was for real. However, despite admiring her pop-meets-performance-art shtick, her music does little for me. But on

*The Fame Monster*

skulks a

[piece of trashy goth-Europop](#)

that's the musical equivalent of smoking – dirty, guilt-ridden and utterly addictive.

Opening with the slow-burning epic dance-floor swirl featured in 90s classics such as Snap's [Rhythm is a Dancer](#)

, Gaga flirts with the song's eponymous 'monster' –

*Don't call me Gaga/I've never seen one like that before/\*chuckle\* Don't look at me like that/You amaze me*

. But lurking behind all this coquettish growling is Gaga in another guise; a girlish, robotic chant, warning of the horrors to come –

*He ate my heart, he a-a-a-ate my heart, he ate my heart, he a-a-ate my heart*

. A chugging mechanical beat and artificial reverb provide an outer-space chorus for Gaga's conflicted vocals. The result is immediate pop genius with a healthy dose of dramatic irony.

*Monster's* verses are propelled by a winning, walloping drum breakdown. Cold, violent and forceful, its explosions power the track like a punch in the face. Gaga sings firmly on the beat, driving the lyrics with emphatic energy. Chord shifts from minor to major send ripples of pleasures down the spine, while keeping things conventional and comfy. It's been used many times before; in this respect, *Monster* is a shuffled version of Rihanna's [Umbrella](#).

But where Rihanna's cosy chord formations created an

["impassioned expression of mutual care and support"](#)

, *Monster's* have the same effect as pre-marital sex in John Carpenter's

*Halloween*

, dragging the listener to the song's inevitable gory ending.

From the trembling, stuttering pouting of the chorus' *M-m-m-monster* to the zombified refrain *He ate my heart*

*Monster*

is tongue-in-cheek horror-pop. A Kylie-esque

*Can't Get You Out Of My Head*

lead-in slides into a powerhouse middle eight, propped up by hiccupping synths and the knowing line

*I wanted to Just Dance/But he took me home instead*

, whacking home the song's punch line –

*Uh-oh there was a monster in my bed/We French-kissed on a subway train/He tore my clothes right off/He ate my heart and then he ate my brain*

. The song's collision of sublime pop and ridiculous camp hits its climax with a pantomime girl-boy duet, in which a baby doll Gaga sings against a menacing male machine to produce something disturbingly similar to Europop masters

[Aqua](#)

. The jury's out on whether this is a good thing.

[PopMatters](#) complains that *Monster's* lyrics “fall apart on the metaphor front (having a boy eat your heart, sure – but eating your brain too?)”. What metaphor?

*Monster*

works best when read purely superficially. There is no subtext. Kind of like Lady Gaga herself, really.

*Monster*

is the tragic tale of a disco kid who takes a gorgeous boy home only to discover that he's actually a zombie who tears out her heart with the same passion that he tears off her clothes. That's what happens to naughty girls, y'see.

And yet amongst all this silliness stalks excellence. Like a zombie plague that sucks the earnest musings from all “serious” music fans, *Monster* hypnotises listeners with its slamming beat and playful lyrics. Lady Gaga's avant-garde approach to fashion, her plastic ugly-beautiful face, her appetite for outlandish spectacle and her big fat contacts book are nothing when she's performing at the top of her game. *Monster* is as invasive and devilish as any zombie.

The next Madonna? No. The first Lady Gaga? Yes.