

'I don't believe in taking it easy'

...says Madonna, who has dedicated her latest album *Rebel Heart* to all the women in India

PRIYANKA SUNDAR

 This is her 13th album and mindful of her fans in India, Madonna has dedicated *Rebel Heart* which released on March 6, to all the women here. A collaboration with Nicki Minaj and Avicii, the 56-year-old superstar talks about her experience working on this album and about how close it is to her.

Like most of her albums, *Rebel Heart* too is clear about its concept. "We live in a time where artists today are not encouraged to speak their minds, express their opinions and think outside the box or even take risks," says Madonna. "Being a rebel at this time is an important part of art. It is when one is a rebel that you get to see new ideas taking centre stage. So I think it's important to draw attention to that idea," she adds.

"For me, being a rebel is not just about provocation. You may be rebelling against some kind of oppression, discrimination or prejudice but you wouldn't necessarily be provocative," she says. And this message from the Queen of Pop is an important one in these times, indeed.

However, typical of the duality that Madonna is famous for exhibiting, the lead single of the album, *Living for Love*, talks

about heartbreak. "It is a song about having your heart broken, yes! However it is also about saying, 'You know what? My life goes on; I will carry on'. I won't stop believing in love. I will pick up my crown, put it back on my head and walk through life proudly believing that true love does exist," she says.

So is this collection of songs autobiographical? "It's hard to qualify and quantify how much is autobiographical and how much is fiction because when I write, sometimes I come from a very personal space and sometimes it's partly made up. But then things merge into one big power-source, where I don't know the difference between what's fiction and non-fiction. It is a collection of many stories and not just mine," she says.

Madonna had earlier worked with Nicki Minaj and this time she has also teamed up with Avicii. "When Nicki and I work together, we sit down, listen to the song and she asks, 'Tell me what you are trying to say through this song?' and we just talk. We share ideas about what the song is about and she hears it, goes



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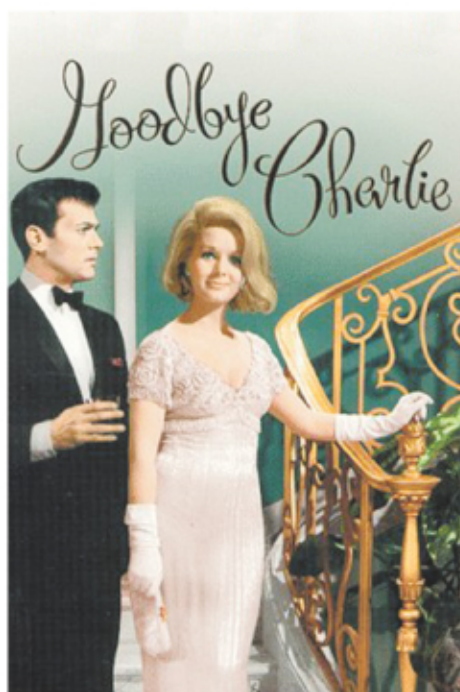
MADONNA

home and thinks about it. I know that as a strong woman, who has to fight for what she does and what she believes in, Nicki can relate to my ideas." The collaboration with Avicii was also born

out of admiration for a fellow artist. "I was a big fan of few of his songs and so I wanted to work with his team. I'm happy about *Rebel Heart* — it turned out really good," she says.

Madonna's final message is to

persevere. "I've always had to push against something or resist against something," she said. "I don't think I've ever been relaxed, so I don't believe in taking it easy and limiting myself as an artist."



Poster of *Goodbye Charlie* (1964), a film about a man who resurrects as an attractive blonde woman

Man, I'd love to be a woman...

Our columnist lists out three reasons why he'd love to be a woman on March 8, International Women's Day



MAGANDEEP SINGH

 These are hard times, hard times indeed. People want so much from life, from others, from their government. They want promising careers, friends, wing-men, a holiday album worthy of Facebook, all-round white picket-fenced lives. Women, they just want to have a sense of independence, and you know they have it worst — because of all things that glo-

riously greedy, gluttonous men want to be today, none of them wants to be a woman.

On this March 8, however, it wouldn't hurt to be a woman. For one, we'd have so many more role models to choose from, our mums included. Here then, are my top three reasons for wanting to be a woman:

EMPATHY:

The reason we don't understand what women face is because we haven't walked in their shoes ever. I am not talking about the difficulties of trying to balance yourself in Louboutin stilettos, but the leers and catcalls that the

macho of any barrio reserve for the women that pass them by. For men, every neighbourhood is safe, for a woman, life can be one unending RPG warzone.

SENSES:

It's proven that women have far superior senses. When detecting colour, smells, sounds and tastes, their sensory organs far outperform anything that even most skilled chefs and sommeliers are capable of. It would be nice to don this technicolour coat for a day rather than shuffle about in our monotonous ennui.

ARGUMENTS & LOGIC:

We men never seem to understand women. We maintain that we argue from logic while they seem to argue from wherever they stand. But for once, I'd like to do a turncoat, see things as they do right from the beginning of a potential disagreement and then see how I defend that point. Also, just for once, I'd like to win an argument and for that sense of achievement alone, a sex-change for a day would be worth it! Maybe that day women can relish the experience of how it feels to sleep on a couch!

The writer is a lover of wine, song and everything fine