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The Queen is dead. Long live the Queen

Dr. Abigail Gardner, University of Gloucestershire

It's odd because Britain usually loves an old Queen. But Madonna, 'Her Madgesty', the 'pop empress' herself has been spurned by Britain's Public Service broadcaster, the BBC. It's premiere youth station; Radio 1 has banned her latest single 'Living for Love' from its playlist on the grounds that it is irrelevant; it just doesn't reach out to the 15 - 19 year olds that constitute its audience. They also say its not that good, citing 'musical merit' as their defense for ditching it. It has though, been played on BBC Radio 2, home to those over 35. Meanwhile, in pop and dance charts across Europe and Japan, the single has charted, coming in at No.12 in Hungary. But the BBC seems to have fallen out of love with this particular Rock Royal.

And so the social media storm erupts. On Facebook and Twitter, fans from all over the world rage against the ageism of the BBC, claiming her as icon and innovator. Madonna detractors call her tired and past her sell by date, irrelevant now. But in moving Madonna away from the Radio 1 playlist, the BBC has inadvertently highlighted exactly how relevant she is. Age matters now. It's where feminism is focused and The Material Girl can't help it but be caught up in this debate. The album, *Rebel Heart* has tracks like 'Unapologetic Bitch', 'Joan of Arc', 'Iconic', 'Holy Water' and 'S.E.X' on it. Religion and sex, power and control remain part of her shtick. That these be housed within a 56-year-old body that refuses to fade gently into the night is what causes BBC brows to furrow. Emily Judd of The Independent (17/2/15) likens her Grammy performance to 'a demented grandma at a school disco', whilst noting that her 'sculpted behind [means that] she's fit enough to put on a spectacular show' for the upcoming tour. Madonna is both a figure of embarrassment (the mad granny) and aspiration (the sculpted bottom). Her continuing relevance is that she confuses and upsets. Her presence within the pop arena, that space configured by and predominantly for, youth is problematic. But we don't expect Keith Richards to stop being Keith Richards, Paul McCartney to disappear gracefully behind the mixing desk. So let's not expect Madonna to be anything but Madonna and stop commenting on her old hands, her old arms, her old age. Let's make that part of her irrelevant.