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Kendrick Lamar, after releasing ruthless ‘Not Like Us,’ says he’s not ‘an angry person’



Kendrick Lamar, seen smiling in a green jacket during production of the music video for “Not Like Us,” is offering a deeper meaning to his hit diss track. (Michael Blackshire / Los Angeles Times)

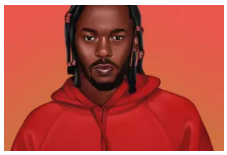
By Alexandra Del Rosario
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For Kendrick Lamar, there’s much more to his catchy hater anthem “Not Like Us” than his disdain for Drake.

Five months after dropping the diss track, which decisively ended the rappers' legendary rap feud earlier this year, Lamar explained in a recent interview that the song is "the energy of who I am, the type of man I represent."

Lamar, a Compton native, contemplated the personal meaning of his Drake diss track in a far-ranging conversation with "All the Stars" collaborator SZA for Harper's Bazaar. "Not Like Us," released in May, was Lamar's final entry in his fiery back-and-forth with Drake.



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The two Grammy winners began trading musical blows in March after Lamar appeared on Future and Metro Boomin's "Like That" to reject the idea that he, Drake and J. Cole were on the same level. Cole had implied this on a verse in Drake's 2023 song "First Person Shooter." By early May, the beef was well underway as both Lamar and Drake each released multiple diss tracks and traded scathing verses alleging domestic violence and child sexual abuse.

Then "Not Like Us," produced by DJ Mustard, came into the mix and rap fans declared Lamar the winner. The song became a near-instant hit as it quickly went viral on social media. At Lamar's Juneteenth "Pop Out" celebration at the Kia Forum, "Not Like Us" made for an unforgettable grand finale.



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"Not Like Us" represents a man who has morals, Lamar told SZA.

“He has values, he believes in something, he stands on something. He’s not pandering,” he said. “He’s a man who can recognize his mistakes and not be afraid to share the mistakes and can dig deep down into fear-based ideologies or experiences to be able to express them without feeling like he’s less of a man.”

He added: “If I’m thinking of ‘Not Like Us,’ I’m thinking of me and whoever identifies with that.”

During the interview, which included no mention of Drake, Lamar told SZA he doesn’t believe he’s “an angry person,” noting he believes in love and war and channels this belief in his music.

“Just allowing them to exist and allowing them to flow through me,” the Pulitzer Prize winner said. “That’s what I believe.”

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Lamar, who filmed the “Not Like Us” music video in Compton, will return to the Super Bowl stage next year after performing in the 2022 halftime show with Dr. Dre, Eminem,

Snoop Dogg, Mary J. Blige and 50 Cent. Roc Nation, Apple Music and the NFL announced in September he will headline this coming year's halftime show Feb. 9 at the Caesars Superdome in New Orleans.

Despite his summer smash and upcoming Super Bowl stint, Lamar said in the interview that music is not his "end goal."

"I get fulfilled sharing my experiences with the youth and allowing them to hear these stories and hear these experiences and catch up to them," he said, adding he values more communication "with people in general."

"Music is just a vessel to get me there."

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