



The Pop Culture Issue



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Pop Political Culture *Alex Wexler*

Influencers, celebrities. The world is fascinated with what these people have to say, following their every move, gossiping about their lives; this is what makes them successful. Pop culture icons dictate every facet of pop culture, which nowadays include which political issues we care about. In recent years, social justice issues have become a staple of pop culture, with many people expecting influencers and celebrities to speak on these issues because they base their opinions on those of the people they admire.



A celebrity's silence in the face of a crisis is often seen as a waste of a platform. However, many celebs have said that they feel pressured to speak on issues they're not familiar with. Especially in the Covid era, celebrities have been expected to spread messages about staying safe and protecting yourself and others against the spread of the virus. Many celebrities have risen to the occasion, frequently posting updates, organizations to donate to for Covid relief, and urging people to social distance, mask up, and vax up. A-listers like Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, Alessandra Ambrosio, Serena Williams, Lenny Kravitz and Rihanna have all posted about helping their communities during the pandemic, and recently Olivia Rodrigo made headlines appearing with Joe Biden at the White House to encourage young people to get vaccinated. It's no surprise that the White House has decided to employ celebrities in the initiative to get people vaccinated given the wide-reaching platforms many celebs like Olivia Rodrigo have.



However, opponents of celebrities getting involved in politics have questioned the professionalism of this move. Some people believe involving teenagers in the movement casts an unprofessional shadow on Biden. Of course many other people have seen this strategy as a fantastic way to involve young people and excite them, which has never been more important. With cases growing amongst young people, and specifically unvaccinated people, it's important that politicians try their best to engage with young people because without this engagement, there's no way vaccination rates will rise. Perhaps involving teen pop singers in matters of pandemics and politics is unconventional, but unprecedented infection rates call for

unprecedented responses! And with all the negativity surrounding our world today, it's somewhat refreshing to see celebrities cross the line into politics to spread strong and powerful messages.

Not Your Pop Culture Queer *Eve Kaplan*

Pop culture is built on stereotypes. The mass media picks a way to represent a



group of people and boxes them into a role they play in society. The sports loving, men hating, tomboy, lesbian. The flamboyant, crazy dressed, obnoxiously loud, comedic relief, gay man. The astrology loving, user of thick eyeliner, long black skirt wearing, emo bisexual. When pop culture has embedded itself so deeply into society, the stereotypes from it bleed over.

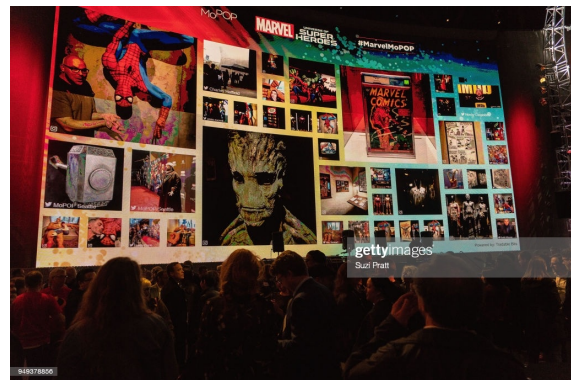
When people say they have a strong “GayDar” or “BiFi” what they really mean is that stereotypes and assumptions are internalized so deeply that they guess people's sexuality based on the way they appear to society. These stereotypes have intertwined themselves with the way we think about others. Feminine lesbians are fetishized by straight males and feminine males are automatically perceived as gay. These stereotypes make it so those parts of the community aren't believed or listened to when they come out if they don't fit into one of them. The reverse is also true; if you do happen to fit one of the stereotypes you are immediately told “OMG I knew it.”

These pop culture stereotypes fade into bias. Yearning for a community is a part of human nature. Many find comfort in people they feel “they understand” and people who make sense to them. As we find a community and those with similarities with us the fear of difference and otherness becomes prevalent. For some people, they fear the members of the LGBTQ+ community that don't fit the stereotype of what pop culture tells us an LGBTQ+ person should be like. This fear is often directed in larger amounts to members of the community that don't fit into a label or what

Children are not born biased, rather they are raised that way. There are a number of contributing factors like family, friends, the location of where they grew up, the school they went to, the religion they were born into, and more. However, one of the main factors that shapes our childhood is the media we are raised on. In the modern age of technology teenagers spend their entire lives consuming ideologies from the internet, popular shows, trends, pop stars, and every piece of the internet. Stereotypical portrayals of LGBTQ+ in pop culture leads to this bias because kids are only seeing a certain portrayal of an LGBTQ+ person.

The Effect of COVID19 On Live Music by *Lily Kramon*

In March of 2020 most of the world went into lockdown due to the rise of cases from a mysterious virus called the Covid-19. Most people assumed it would be a quick few weeks and then activities would resume to normal. Now it is August of 2021, and covid-19 is still here and toying with our daily lives. Certain aspects of life have returned such as dining, movies, and shopping. However, it has been



extremely difficult for large events such as concerts to return to normal. The live music industry has taken one of the hardest hits in this pandemic. As other businesses and industries begin to return to normal, live music is still trying to recover from the year of live concerts and music festivals that was lost.

Large music festivals such as Coachella were put on hold in 2020 and 2021. Another group of live music that was affected by the pandemic included small music venues and singer-songwriters that would perform at cafes and local venues. For the past year, artists have resorted to live streaming their performances and putting together events for people to attend online. Not only does this damage musicians and companies financially, but it also damages the morale of artists. These artists have devoted their lives to making music and performing it in front of large passionate crowds, or in some cases in front of civilians dining in restaurants or stopping by a cafe. Not only have musicians been affected, but the crew that works alongside them to put together creative concerts haven't been able to do their job. Artists have been able to release music, but haven't been able to perform their new songs and albums live for fans. Throughout 2020 and some of 2021 musicians have relied on the strength of their



fans and the community to continue to support them through virtual concerts and exclusive zoom meet and greets. While many long for the return of large concerts and music festivals, they also believe in the power of music and its ability to get us through tough times. This past summer, music festivals such as lollapalooza and Rolling loud went forward in person. Here hundreds of thousands of people crowded the venues and fields ready to enjoy live performances again. Musicians expressed their excitement to return to doing what

they love and performing their music in front of a passionate crowd. While it is unknown what the future holds with vaccinations and new Covid-19 variants, we have learned that live music cannot be replaced virtually, but no matter what music can hold a community together.

Cancel Culture Relationship To Pop Culture

Lexi Allard

When something or in this case (someone) is cancelled it is cut, ended, terminated like a TV show that didn't make the cut. When a person is canceled they are no longer supported publicly. Many celebrities lose their careers to cancel culture. Canceling is usually done after it has been discovered that someone has done something offensive. It involves calling out bad behavior, and withdrawing from supporting their work. (Such as listening to the celebrities' music, or watching their TV show.) The main target of canceling is taking away someone's fame, and their public platform. Canceling today is usually done on social media.

Sia; singer, songwriter, actress, and music video director, received backlash after her film Music was released. Following her release of the film Music, many individuals have "canceled" Sia. The film follows the story of an autistic teenager. Social media users have deemed it 'offensive' and claimed that it fails to portray such autism accurately way.

The main character, Music Gamble, is played by Maddie Zeigler. Even before the film was released, fans were upset, claiming many things were



people really act.

incorrect with the film such as her choice of casting a non-austistic actress, and the absence of research.

Irish actress Bronagh Waugh questioned why the main character wasn't played as an autistic actress. "It's pretty offensive the way you've chosen to portray this character. People with disabilities are not broken and don't need fixing," she said. After all, there are a wide range of autistic actresses that would have been great to play the role. Sia then replied with: "I agree. I've never referred to Music as disabled. Special abilities is what I've always said, and casting someone at her level of functioning was cruel, not kind, so I made the executive decision that we would do our best to lovingly represent the community." Yet, this was met with more backlash. Twitter users began saying that Sia hadn't done enough research about how autistic

Others thought the trailer portrayed autistic people as suffering. They said it should take a more positive outlook. The movie should focus on how a autistic person really acts. It should showcase what they go through on a daily basis, it is hard without a doubt but it is important to showcase their abilities and gifts.

Entitlement, Pop Culture & Politics *Eve Kaplan*

America thrives off entitlement, those who were born privileged feeling as if the entire world belongs to them. When you look at politics, more often than not you see politicians from high socioeconomic statuses and living in a society made to serve them. Historically our Senate, House Of Representatives, and past Presidents have all been dominated by the extremely privileged. America was built by people who felt they were superior to the rest of the world because of the family fate granted them with. America's entire country and government is made of systems fueled by entitlement.



There is nothing particularly special about pop culture stars, they are merely people. In the same way entitlement has intertwined itself with politics, it has intertwined itself in pop culture. Celebrities are worshiped and given a sense of entitlement because they have high economic statuses and are looked up to by adoring and obsessive fans. The entitlement given to pop stars gives them a form of power. Our culture of entitlement romanticizes the life of celebrities such as the now untouchable, eighteen year old, Olivia Rodrigo. The separation we have granted celebrities with has blinded them from more simple problems such as

poverty and lack of healthcare. Power and entitlement have tied themselves together following the footsteps of our government.

Under capitalism there has to be people at the top exploiting others. Politicians and celebrities are simply the ones at the top of their fields. Celebrities are not looking out for their fans, rather they feel they compete to make more money than everyone else around them. Instead of turning to gratefulness towards their fans for granting them the high pedestal, celebrities continue the endless competition. Celebrities follow the pattern of forgetting about the viewers and listeners who made them famous and they gain money hardly giving back. Politicians were made to be civil servants, but when so many refuse to tax the rich and aren't looking out for the best interest of many civilians in this country, it's easy to see how entitled many are.

A Personal Experience in the Problems of our New Activism *Sophie Saxl*

The privileged leaders, clean, presentable faces, underdogs who've truly held power all along. White, performative activism, a problem in society only boosted by pop culture and its standards.

General activism on social media is fueled with big and mainstream

accounts. Feminist, Impact, and So.Informed (formerly soyouwanttotalkabout) are all examples of these big feeding accounts. Simple names, easy activism. You barely have to read or look into an issue to repost one of their posts to your story and make yourself appear informed and well educated on political subjects. These accounts may seem like a great way to make a change in a world in which we as people often feel powerless, but as someone with lots of experience on "activism Instagram", I can tell you there are more issues than we are able to see, or more realistically, than we choose to see.

With over 6 million followers, Feminist has been a prominent outlet of performative, non-intersectional social media activism. Before the leadership switch in early 2021, they often reposted Tik Toks or useless infographics about daily problems for the average woman. There was also the occasional drop in of videos of white women dancing to facts about rape culture, or the classic white feminist's anti bra messaging. When they did post semi-useful information, feminist never bothered to credit the smaller creator who actually made it. The feminist feed became pretty



drawings and infographics with a sprinkle of actual information (along with fluffy cows to “wish you a happy Sunday”). It was all a bit confusing until the pieces fell into place. The account was run by 2 men, Tanner Sweitzer and Jacob Castaldi. 2 cisgender, white men catfishing to an audience of millions. Not only was this off-putting, but it was extremely disturbing . Though Feminist has been put under new management, this was a wake up call, at least for me. The fact that prominent celebrities were reposting these things, the fact that I had; I felt bad for not seeing through what was going on, until I realized, no one had. These posts were the easy way into feminism, when really they had taken the “femme” experience out of feminism..

I remember posting about not traveling during COVID, but then I realized I had friends who were actively traveling. I was performing for everyone around me, and then I saw it. There it was. The whole problem with social media’s activism. It



wasn’t just me, it was everyone under societal pressure. Led by celebrities, followed by teenagers trying to look smart and politically aware in their following suit.

Like I said, it’s not just us, celebrities lead these performances. Specifically during the beginning of COVID, many celebrities begged others to social distance while still going about their own birthday parties, huge group hangouts, and general social gatherings (greatly

discouraged during the beginning and peak of the pandemic).

Many feel like they need to balance out showing the best parts of their personal lives on social media with also showing their awareness in activism (which quickly becomes performative). The societal pressure that pop culture and celebrities have created is toxic. Proving yourself and your life better than others while still looking like a person who cares (key word: looking) cannot balance itself rightfully, and at least one side always ends up askew and corrupt in some way.

If we’re going to try and make a change, we must start by welcoming everyone into our gate-kept version of feminism. We have to acknowledge privilege and let people change. We have to realize that together we can make more of an impact with new methods. Instead of petitions and stories everyone clicks through, let’s create unconventional feminism. The refusal to embrace intersectionality, a weak eye for an eye of white feminism will soon make the whole world blind.