

Shock Value: The new currency of pop culture



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Staff Reporter

She did what in her music video? She cut off her leg? She stopped singing in the middle of a concert? She wore a meat dress? Oh, Lady Gaga. “Why,” we ask ourselves as we YouTube search the “Bad Romance” music video for the fifth time, “is this fashion faux pas machine being crowned the Queen of Pop Culture?”

The answer is as obvious as her outfits: shock value. The progression of entertainment in America is, in fact, not progression at all. It is rather a slow decline from talent appreciation to a primitive desire for the senses to be stimulated by any means. And while Lady Gaga is a prime example of this cultural regression, blaming her for what we as Americans have requested would be absurd. Pop culture has granted our wish to be entertained, but the entertainment we receive is in no way high-caliber. The talent of yesteryear has been replaced by the “reality” of today, and as a result, we take whatever the media will give us.

The reason we have settled for short-order entertainment has everything to do with our fast-paced lifestyles. No longer do we have time to attend a two-act play or watch a classic film. Even a 90-minute movie can be too time consuming for our agendas. Rather than assessing whether or not we actually enjoy or appreciate what we are watching, we examine the viral popularity of the latest hits, and pursue them accordingly. Whether we are watching Jersey Shore’s Nicole ‘Snooki’ Polizzi being physically abused at a bar or tuning into MSNBC to see if Lindsay Lohan will spend more time in jail, shock value is what drives our Google searches and tabloid purchases. A recent trailer for the upcoming season of *America’s Next Top Model* featured Ann, a six-foot-two aspiring model. This girl made Tyra Banks, as well as the rest of the watching world, gasp in astonishment and gained 129,043 YouTube hits in one month simply because she was born with an extremely small waist. In

addition to relatively new “shock stars,” even perennial television favorite Betty White surprises us. When an 88-year-old woman’s words need censoring on *Saturday Night Live*, we raise our eyebrows, chuckle, and applaud her for “keeping up with the times.”

However, classic entertainers didn’t need expletives, a jail sentence, or a plastic bubble bodysuit to gain publicity. Being able to act and sing beautifully was, in Julie Andrews’ case, her ticket to fame. Grace Kelly’s elegance and cinematic charm won her an Oscar, a meaningful and tangible award that not even a million video hits could render. Judy Garland didn’t need orange skin, poofy hair, or a bad attitude to steal the hearts of Americans with “Over the Rainbow.” The work and talent of each of these women has stood the test of time. Perhaps we have something to learn from Gaga’s more classy predecessors.

Granted, this is the 21st century, and change in entertainment is inevitable. But a fine line exists between innovation and a simple switch of methods. This age of preoccupation that we live in is the culmination of a long-planned method switch. Lowered standards, music videos, and the Internet are a few reasons why entertainment underwent such drastic changes during the tail end of the 20th century.

So what’s wrong with shock value becoming Pop Culture’s currency? Perhaps the answer lies in how what we watch affects how we live the rest of our lives. With media so readily available, we are becoming infatuated with the lives of others. This unhealthy obsession with gossip and shock is keeping us from identifying true talent in the entertainment world. The at-your-fingertips and in-your-face nature of shock value will keep us satisfied with whatever we can click unless we decide otherwise. Instead of accepting shock value as the counterfeit that it is, we must search for entertainment that holds true worth. Why should we be wowed by something so simple as a woman in a glitzy costume when there is true art to be admired and music to be heard? After all, we deserve more than a “lady” in a meat dress.

That’s All FOLKES

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Dear Mr. Folkes,
The cafeteria lady said I owe \$4.00, and I haven’t charged any money to my account. What should I do?

Sincerely,
Tamesha Puckett

Dear Tamesha,
You should get with Mr. Mike and check to see if someone else has been using your number because that could be the problem.

That’s All,
Mr. Folkes

Dear Mr. Folkes,
My math teacher said I have a test on Friday, and I have no clue how to do this stuff. What should I do?

Sincerely,
Trisha Pierce

Dear Trisha,
Start off by asking your math teacher if you can come in before school or after school for extra tutoring, and maybe ask a fellow classmate who understands to help you as well.

That’s All,
Mr. Folkes

Dear Mr. Folkes,
How can we recruit more guys to be in our Showchoir?

Sincerely,
CenterStage Showchoir

Dear Showchoir,
Well, I think a lot of the recruiting starts off at a younger age, so you could try to approach the middle school. You could also put out more posters to get the word out, and maybe do more shows throughout the year to really showcase the talent in this fine school. Also word of mouth is always a good investment. If you know some guys that can sing and dance, go ask them.

That’s All,
Mr. Folkes

Dear Mr. Folkes,
What was your favorite subject in high school?

Sincerely,
Walton Mallette

Dear Walton,
Well, I taught science at Oak Grove for several years, so I’d say science and history were probably my two favorite classes to take. I excelled in both of them.

That’s All,
Mr. Folkes

E-MAIL

If you’d like to submit a question to Mr. Folkes, please e-mail it to warriorbeat@gmail.com.

Upgrade or downgrade?

By: Sydney Sanders
Copy Editor

When I was a little girl, there were a few things I loved: the music of *NSync and Britney Spears, and television shows like *7th Heaven* and *Full House* made the short list. Imagine my glee when my current favorite show combined two of those old favorites in one 60-minute event! In just the second episode of an already fabulous second season, *Glee* managed to work its way even further into my heart with a cameo by Britney Spears and the addition of “Uncle Jessie” to the cast. In this episode, the events at McKinley High center around Britney songs, allowing Britney the opportunity to make an appearance via anesthesia-induced fantasies brought about by Emma’s new boyfriend, Carl The Dentist, played by...you guessed it, John Stamos! This genius compilation deserves the status Upgrade. It doesn’t get much better than that.

upgrade
Being a gleek

Over the three previous seasons, the Saints have played 12 games without star running back Reggie Bush. In those games, they went 8-4 and averaged 33.4 points a game. Last season, they played two games without Bush. They won them both and averaged 38 points a game. And last Sunday, the Saints proved that winning without Bush is going to be tough this season as well. Falling to the Falcons 27-24 in overtime, Saints Quarterback Drew Brees completed 30 of 38 passes, and struggled allowing two key interceptions. Suffering a broken fibula during the second week’s game against the 49ers, Bush predicts that he’ll return from his injury sooner than anyone expects. Though Bush is moving around without a limp or crutches, an upper fibula fracture is no small injury. His timetable is 4-6 weeks. “It’s frustrating,” he said. “But I think it will be less time than everybody thinks.” (*The Times-Picayune*) Fans know that Bush’s heart is with the game, and he will do what it takes to get back on the field as soon as possible. Offering up his Heisman Trophy from 2005 after investigations of USC’s football team several years ago, Bush has certainly had a rough start to the 2010 NFL season. Here’s hoping that leg heals sooner than even Bush expects.

downgrade
Reggie Bush out for Saints’s season?

NFL greats Brett Favre and Steve McNair. Iron Chef Cat Cora. *America’s Got Talent* winner Michael Grimm. *Master Chef* winner and USM student Whitney Miller. *Good Morning America* anchor Robin Roberts. FORD model Andie Arthur. Miss Mississippi Outstanding Teen Christina Bostick. All of these famous, and some soon to be famous, names have one thing in common: South Mississippi is their home. We may be one of the poorest states; we may struggle with issues like racism, obesity, and illiteracy, but we get plenty of things right, too. Calling Oak Grove, Mississippi home? Definitely an upgrade.

upgrade
Fame in small-town Mississippi

More than eight months ago, when the first signs of improvement began to take shape on Hwy. 98 West, few of us anticipated the road that lay ahead. Weeks of uneven lanes have caused alignment problems for car owners and backed-up traffic. But for the most part, it looks like that phase of work is just about complete. But now the road crews have moved to Hwy. 24, and the problem is more personal than ever. Bus delays have been a problem all year, especially in the afternoon. Now with the added construction, bus riders are not being released until nearly 4:00 p.m., making 4th block classes last two hours! Something has got to give. A suggestion: reverse the route to release high school first (making the route from the elementary schools to the high school a diversion down the now clear Hwy. 98), THEN release middle school students. Haven’t we been the fall guys long enough?

downgrade
Road expansion leading to later school days

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