Beat: Entertainment

The Bad PRomance: The Lady Gaga Public Image Saga

From Joker To Jokes

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USPA NEWS - Lady Gaga has long been a magnetic force in the entertainment industry, renowned for her bold image, avant-garde music, and fashion statements that often border on the surreal. However, in recent years, the pop star has encountered a string of controversies and challenges, casting shadows over her once untouchable public image. Some fans and critics have started to see her once-authentic aura as increasingly out of touch, if not dismissive of the public's expectations.

A Change in Attitude?

Critics have noted that Lady Gaga's dismissive response to backlash has contributed to her shifting status in mainstream pop. Once a champion for the underdog and a symbol of authenticity, Gaga's approach is now seen by some as superficial and tone-deaf. Her focus on Hollywood glitz, rather than the honesty and rawness she was once admired for, has distanced her from a portion of her fan base. The turning point for some was her high-profile reward offer for her stolen dogs, prioritizing the pets over the injured dog walker, which left a sour taste for many of her followers.

From Joker to Jokes?

Gaga's latest film venture, Joker: Folie à Deux, was initially hyped as a major collaboration with Warner Bros. However, despite a production budget that soared to $200 million, the film grossed only $200 million at the box office—far below the amount needed to break even once marketing and distribution costs were considered. With a CinemaScore of "D" and a 33% rating on Rotten Tomatoes, it was poorly received by both critics and audiences. Fans who flocked to see Joker with Joaquin Phoenix in the first installment largely stayed away from the sequel, which plummeted in its second week, suffering an 81% box office drop.

The Envy Gaga

Behind the scenes, Gaga was reportedly embroiled in a rivalry with fellow pop star Christina Aguilera, supposedly setting her up against Hollywood influencers such as celebrity blogger Perez Hilton. This feud allegedly contributed to the underperformance of Aguilera's album, Bionic, as Hilton publicly accused Aguilera of copying Gaga's style. Ironically, French artist Orlan was closely watching Gaga and soon after sued her for $31.7 million, alleging that Gaga had plagiarized her work for the Born This Way video.

The suit, filed in New York, that subpoenaed Gaga's creative team into the courtroom.

Infringement of Labor Standards Act

Adding to her list of controversies, Gaga faced a lawsuit from her former personal assistant, who claimed unpaid overtime, asserting that Gaga failed to comply with the Fair Labor Standards Act. This wasn't the only legal dispute she faced; music producer Rob Fusari, who worked on her debut album The Fame, also took legal action against Gaga, alleging he was denied rightful royalty shares.

The MGA Entertainment Lawsuit

Gaga's legal issues didn't end with music; her merchandising was also called into question. MGA Entertainment filed a lawsuit against Gaga, claiming she and her management team delayed the release of a line of Gaga dolls, costing MGA millions. MGA argued that they invested heavily in production after paying a $1 million advance and organizing distribution, only to have the project postponed, reportedly at Gaga's insistence.

The "Shallow" Controversy

One of Gaga's biggest hits, Shallow, won her an Academy Award. But the hit song soon attracted attention for all the wrong reasons

when musician Steve Ronsen claimed Gaga had copied a three-note progression from his 2012 song Almost. Although the lawsuit was initially dismissed by Gaga's team as frivolous, the similarities between the two songs raised questions that lingered in the public's mind, suggesting that Shallow's origin might be murkier than fans would hope.

The Transition Into Acting

Lady Gaga's transition from pop stardom to acting has often drawn polarized reactions, especially from critics who view her as emblematic of the type of inconsistency in image that the Academy tends to shy away from. Many see her performances as relying heavily on her established musical fan base rather than reaching new cinematic audiences, resulting in viewers tuning in less to experience a story and more to watch "Lady Gaga as an actress." This blurred focus between her image and roles has made it difficult for some to take her film work seriously, especially as her persona shifts frequently.

Furthermore, her approach can appear contradictory—presenting herself as down-to-earth and empathetic, yet embodying the same commercial imperatives as any other large brand, leveraging social issues and personal struggles for her own professional gain. For audiences, this sense of insincerity or brand-based empathy risks alienating them over time, as they tire of the disconnect between her on-screen sincerity and the reality of profit-driven celebrity culture.

A significant issue with casting pop stars like Lady Gaga in major films like Joker is that it can polarize audiences and shift the focus away from the story itself. While her fanbase may support her music, it doesn't necessarily translate into cinema attendance, as many fans are more interested in her persona than her acting. Joker, for instance, may suffer from this kind of casting choice, as Gaga's involvement risks overshadowing the narrative and turning the film into a divisive topic.

For some viewers, her controversial public stances and political involvement become a distraction, complicating the film's reception and deterring potential viewers who aren't interested in her brand.

This can make it challenging for the film to gain a broad audience and critical acclaim, as it becomes a magnet for both her admirers and detractors. In this sense, the choice to cast Gaga isn't just an artistic decision but one that could impact Joker's box-office success and critical legacy.

Die With a Smile

In a recent collaboration with Bruno Mars on the track Die With a Smile, Gaga's reputation took another hit. While the song received positive reviews, many listeners felt it carried more of Bruno Mars' flair than Gaga's. Fans and critics alike suggested that Mars's solo efforts would have been more impactful, with some even questioning if Gaga's contributions were necessary.

Though she's still an person of influence, Lady Gaga's recent years have been a turbulent chapter in her career. From legal battles to declining fan engagement and struggles to connect with her audience authentically, Gaga's story reflects the challenges of maintaining relevance in a constantly evolving industry. Only time will tell if she'll reclaim her persona or fade as a cautionary tale of fame's fleeting nature.

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