

Public Abstract

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Title:NAME ONE GENIUS THAT AINT CRAZY- MISCONCEPTIONS OF MUSICIANS AND MENTAL HEALTH IN THE ONLINE STORIES OF PITCHFORK MAGAZINE

The idea of the musician in a pop-culture driven society is a powerful one. Their function is far from a utilitarian one for it spirals out into numerous directions: Truth-teller, critic, pacifier, culture shifter. Because of this wide range, it is perhaps no surprise that there can be an equally wide range for how musicians are covered in the press.

This study focuses on Pitchfork, often pegged as the Internet's predominant "curator of cool," and analyzes how mental health issues are treated in reviews, news and stories about ten musicians, eight male and two female. The text and headlines of 264 online articles, which focused on these 10 artists and two broader topics of depression and references to suicide, were analyzed over a three month period and 171 of them contained no specific references to mental health, mental illness or mental health issues. Of the remaining articles grouped in artist coverage or depression discussion, there were 148 references to mental health, mental illness or mental health issues. One particular finding from these references is that Pitchfork can do better when it comes to discussing issues of suicide and agency of one's mental health issues.

Several key questions guide such analysis (Gillis, 2011). What does Pitchfork owe to musicians with mental health issues and how can the publication better serve the musicians and those who consume stories about them? Through textual analysis this project looked for instances where Pitchfork may have played into the mythologization of troubled musicians and cases where the publication followed recommendations given by mental health reporting guides.