

Opinions

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Editorial

Tongue, teddy bears and twerking: Miley's botched bad-girl transition

The world — but more importantly, Will Smith's family — gaped at Miley Cyrus' lecherous performance, heavy on twerking and foam-finger humping, at the MTV Video Music Awards. After everyone had a chance to absorb what happened on stage, the jokes flowed freely. The highlights: Robin Thicke's Beetlejuice suit, Cyrus' uncanny resemblance to Angelica Pickles' Cynthia doll and that busy, lizard-like tongue.

Pinpointing exactly when Cyrus began the not-so-calculated attempts to shed her clean Disney image is difficult — was it the infamous salvia-smoking incident of 2010 or the leaked photos of her pretending to lick a phallus-shaped cake in 2012?

If she were any other 20-year-old dealing with the trials of young adulthood, like her parents' fractured marriage or the anxiety of transitioning from childhood to adulthood, her behavior wouldn't seem so out of the ordinary. Cutting off her hair and bleaching it? Smoking a joint now and then? Discovering the novelty of provocative dancing and tossing around the F-bomb in conversations, just because? That's, like, all in a day's work for any given high school girl. But Cyrus' career is based on the Disney brand she embraced for years, and asking fans to accept the bad-girl image she's trying to craft is a stretch.

It seems that Cyrus is trying to emulate the smooth transition Rihanna made between her early years to now. In 2005, Rihanna entered the music world with long hair and glossy pink lips like every other pop ingénue, but between "Good Girl Gone Bad," "Rated R," "Loud" and "Unapologetic," a series of iconic hairstyles, drastic changes to her image and the public account of her complicated relationship with Chris Brown, she transformed into a hardened, edgier artist. Now, she's a powerhouse. When she introduces new work, people listen. When Miley Cyrus introduced her new look and sound, she was mocked.

"Maybe it's just her way of letting the world know, once again, that Miley Cyrus is All Grown Up," Entertainment Weekly critic Grady Smith wrote.

Everything about Miley Cyrus smacks of trying too hard, especially her claim that she "never played the Disney game of smiling and being a princess." Her commercial success entirely has to do with her dad's fame and her early work with "Hannah Montana."

Rihanna never relied on industry connections to start her career. It's undeniable that her attractiveness is part of her success, but she had a sense of self-reliance that Disney-groomed Cyrus never had.

"I've been paying my own bills since I was 17, living in a foreign country," Rihanna said in a 2010 interview with W Magazine.

Miley Cyrus will never sell her bad-girl image, but she certainly won't stop trying. Sweet niblets!

Reader response

Today's question: Are you having problems connecting to the Internet on campus?

Monday's question: Was *NSYNC's performance at the VMAs too short?
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16% NO
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Column

Ben Affleck can probably pull off Batman

Last week, Warner Bros. announced Ben Affleck will play Bruce Wayne opposite Henry Cavill's Clark Kent in the coming Batman vs. Superman movie.

That's when the Internet exploded.

If Warner Bros. wanted publicity, it chose well.

It wasn't long before the public and celebrities alike took to Twitter to slam Affleck's talent and suggest alternates to play Batman, including Jar Jar Binks, Paula Deen, Jerry Sandusky and more.

Affleck hardly seems like the go-to actor for a dark, troubled crime fighter loaded with money and angst.

Christian Bale was certainly a more natural choice after his role in "The Machinist," but maybe the Internet should give Benny Boy a break.

Batman fans are citing movies like 2003's "Gigli" and "Daredevil" in their case against the casting decision.

Concerned movie-goers can take heart knowing Ben Affleck is not proud of this highly criticized pair of films.

His resume has improved a good deal since 2003.

He is no longer living the worst year of his life in front of a rolling camera.

After coming under fire for his portrayal of Daredevil and being a DC Comics fan himself, it's doubtful he assumed another superhero role lightly.

Ben's directorial debut came in 1993 with a little film titled "I Killed my Lesbian Wife, Hung her on a Meat Hook, and now I Have a Three Picture Deal at Disney."

Years later, he turned out "The Town" and "Argo."

If that pattern repeats itself from "Daredevil" to the "Man of Steel" sequel, this will be a performance worth waiting for.

Another concern of DC Comics fans is that Affleck's very presence will cause the "Man of Steel" sequel to flop.

They don't want the caped crusader plunked into a shallow, cinematic grave next to Daredevil and John

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Gigli.

The box-office earnings of "The Town" and "Argo," both of which he directed and starred in, added up to more

than \$228 million.

It seems his involvement is less a virulent case of the flops and more a wise move by Warner Bros. to keep up the golden streak.

It's natural that fans of large franchises will yell the loudest following castings for characters as iconic as The Bat.

Let's look at two past examples:

Heath Ledger withstood his fair share of criticism when he was cast as The Joker.

His performance is now heralded as the best portrayal of the villain to date.

Anne Hathaway, typecast as Mia Thermopolis, seemed an unlikely choice for Catwoman until she was straddling a motorcycle and socking it to henchmen left and right.

Then, her acting range was applauded, and everyone ate their words.

So, to summarize, no matter how Battfleck performs in the upcoming "Man of Steel" sequel, he can't hurt the legacy of Christopher Nolan and Christian Bale.

Affleck's take on the character will be absolutely his own.

It will be a new chapter rather than a continuation.

As Joss Whedon said in his pithy tweet, Ben will "crush it" and, if nothing else, "he's got the chin."

For those in the minority who have no strong opinion about the casting, only one thing is abundantly clear: Ben Affleck's jaw line is sharp, and he can use it to divide the nation in one fell swoop.

Katie McPherson is a UF English junior. Her column appears on Tuesdays.

The views expressed here are not necessarily those of the Alligator.