



Oops, She Did It Again ... Spears Steals Other Stars' Scandals

Like She Has Done Throughout Her Career, Britney Can't Seem to Stop Mimicking the Behavior of Her Fellow Celebs

By MARCUS BARAM

Feb. 19, 2007 — - Thank you Britney. We are still entertained. But what's really going on with you? Why are you acting this way? Are you lost, or just looking for attention?

The pop star's headline-making behavior last week -- shaving her head and getting tattoos after a quick stay in rehab -- seemed to reflect the crazed antics of a wild child.

But Spears wasn't necessarily breaking new ground. Haven't we seen some of this behavior from famous people before, and is it all really so shocking? Just as she has mimicked the look and style of other performers throughout her career, Spears isn't necessarily terribly original when it comes to her antics, say scholars who study popular culture.

After all, in recent years a long line of celebrities, from Lindsay Lohan and Nicole Richie to Mel Gibson and Ben Affleck, have done a well-publicized stint in rehab either to address real addictions or just to escape the maelstrom of paparazzi.

As for the tattoos, it's become so ubiquitous in the past decade that it's almost more radical to leave your body untouched.

And the chrome dome? Demi Moore, Sinead O'Connor and Natalie Portman were pulling off that look years ago.

It wasn't so controversial for them.

"What's really obvious is that Britney is imitating people who became famous for behaving erratically," says University of Buffalo professor Elayne Rapping, who studies popular culture.

Spears seems to be mimicking the behavior of other stars, like Anna Nicole Smith and Liza Minelli, who started to act more erratically as their popularity faded, says Rapping.

"If their career tanks, they will do outrageous things to keep their names and faces in the public eye," she says. "It's not very original. What's next? Will she adopt an African baby, like Angelina Jolie and Madonna?"

That's pretty harsh, but some say that Spears may tend to borrow from other celebrities because she hasn't developed enough self-confidence and a sense of independence.

"She's young and doesn't have a strong sense of self so she's easily influenced," says Elena Casteneda, the director of New York Image Consultants. "Anything that comes her way, she goes towards that. Hanging out with the likes of people she's hanging out with, she ends up behaving like them."

Already in her debut album, Spears was following in the footsteps of such '80s stars as Debbie Gibson and Tiffanie, who carefully cultivated their image. But she took it a step further with a little inspiration from Madonna.

Back in 1984, the Material Girl shocked audiences -- and earned plenty of press -- when she writhed on the floor in a wedding dress while singing "Like a Virgin" at the first MTV Video Music Awards.

A decade and a half later, Spears responded by provocatively dancing while wearing a Catholic schoolgirl outfit in the video for "Hit Me Baby One More Time." And the snake-clad body stocking she donned to sing "Slave 4 U" at the 2001 MTV Video Music Awards was a nod to Madonna's pioneering performance.

In 2003, Spears jumped on the lesbian kiss bandwagon (made famous by Courteney Cox and Jennifer Aniston's sapphic smooch on "Friends" in 2001) when she made out with -- who else? -- Madonna at the MTV Video Music Awards.

Last year, when Spears was pregnant with her second child, she mimicked Demi Moore's famous pose on the cover of the August 1991 Vanity Fair, by appearing naked on the cover of Harper's Bazaar.

Maybe it's a good thing she's stayed within these semi-scandalous boundaries. If Britney were to do something really original, she might actually hurt herself.

At this point, Spears might be advised to follow the example of other scandal-plagued celebrities such as Vanessa Williams and Rob Lowe who were able to remove themselves from the spotlight and then make a comeback.

"She needs to really go into rehab and get into serious therapy," says Castaneda. "She should work on a sense of self and attend to her children, make that the priority in her life."

Here's a rundown of Spears' more scandalous acts -- and her inspirations:

- Unknown pop singer making it big by posing provocatively in a sexy music video (Madonna)
- On-air lesbian kiss (Jennifer Aniston and Courtney Cox)
- Singer starring in bad movie (Madonna)
- Making sex video (Paris Hilton)
- Posing nude while pregnant (Demi Moore)
- Marrying below her station (Elizabeth Taylor, Jennifer Lopez)
- Out-of-control partying (Paris Hilton, Lindsay Lohan, et al)
- Shaving head (Demi Moore, Natalie Portman)
- Getting tattoos (Everyone)
- Rush rehab (Lindsay Lohan, Nicole Ritchie)

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