

Rolling Stone Worst Decisions In Music History



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When it comes to chronicling the evolution of music and the artists who shape it, few publications hold as much weight as Rolling Stone. However, even the most revered institutions can make questionable choices that leave fans and critics alike scratching their heads. In this article, we will delve into some of Rolling Stone's most infamous decisions in music history, exploring everything from controversial album rankings to questionable cover choices and their impact on the music landscape.

Controversial Album Rankings

One of the most contentious aspects of Rolling Stone's legacy is its album rankings. The magazine has published several lists over the years that have sparked outrage among music enthusiasts. Here are some of the most notable examples:

1. The 500 Greatest Albums of All Time

Rolling Stone's "500 Greatest Albums of All Time" list, first published in 2003 and updated in 2012, has been a source of controversy since its inception. Here are some decisions that have drawn ire:

- **Exclusion of Iconic Albums:** While the list includes classics like The Beatles' "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band," it has notably omitted other essential works. For instance, many were shocked to see Radiohead's "OK Computer" ranked below more obscure albums.
- **Misplaced Rankings:** The ranking of certain albums often seems arbitrary. For example, the inclusion of albums like "The Dark Side of the Moon" at a lower position than some less influential records caused fans to question the criteria used for selection.
- **Changing Trends:** The music landscape is always evolving, and what was once groundbreaking may not hold the same significance decades later. Consequently, some argue that the list fails to adequately represent contemporary artists, leading to an outdated perspective.

2. Snubbing Hip-Hop and R&B Artists

Rolling Stone has often been criticized for its treatment of hip-hop and R&B, genres that have shaped modern music. While the magazine has made strides in recent years to include more artists from these genres, its historical snubbing has left a bitter taste for many:

- **Limited Representation:** For years, artists like Tupac Shakur, Nas, and Missy Elliott were underrepresented in the magazine's listings compared to their rock counterparts.
- **Diversity Issues:** The magazine's rock-centric focus has led to accusations of cultural insensitivity and a failure to recognize the significance of genres that have played a crucial role in shaping music history.

Questionable Cover Choices

Rolling Stone covers often serve as a cultural touchstone, capturing the zeitgeist of a particular era or musical movement. However, some cover choices have raised eyebrows and sparked controversy:

1. The Cover Featuring Dzhokhar Tsarnaev

In 2013, Rolling Stone's decision to feature Boston Marathon bombing suspect Dzhokhar Tsarnaev on its cover was met with widespread outrage. Critics argued that:

- **Glorification of Violence:** The cover, which presented Tsarnaev in a way that some considered glamorous, was seen as a troubling portrayal that glorified violence and terrorism.
- **Victim Disregard:** Many felt the choice disrespected the victims of the bombing and their families, leading to boycotts of the magazine and negative backlash across social media.

2. Celebrating Controversial Figures

Rolling Stone has also faced criticism for featuring artists whose actions or statements have drawn significant controversy. For example:

- **Chris Brown:** After his infamous assault on Rihanna, Rolling Stone's decision to feature Chris Brown on the cover sparked debates about the media's role in rehabilitating the image of artists who have committed acts of violence.
- **Michael Jackson:** While Jackson is undeniably one of the most influential figures in music history, his legacy is marred by allegations of abuse. Critics have questioned Rolling Stone's coverage of Jackson, arguing that it sometimes downplayed these serious issues.

Overlooking Influential Artists

While Rolling Stone has recognized numerous trailblazers in the music world, it has also overlooked several influential artists whose contributions deserve acknowledgment:

1. Women in Rock

Despite the significant contributions of female artists to rock music, Rolling Stone has often been criticized for its lack of representation:

- **Underrepresentation:** Women like Joan Jett, Stevie Nicks, and Pat Benatar have historically been underrepresented in the magazine's coverage and rankings.
- **Missed Opportunities:** The failure to adequately celebrate female artists in rock history reflects a broader issue of gender bias within the music industry.

2. Genre Bias

Rolling Stone's focus on rock has led to the neglect of artists from other genres who have made significant contributions:

- **Country Music:** While the magazine has occasionally covered country artists, it has often overlooked influential figures like Dolly Parton and Johnny Cash in favor of rock icons.
- **Electronic Music:** The rise of electronic music has transformed the soundscape, yet artists in this genre, such as Daft Punk and Calvin Harris, have received limited recognition from the magazine.

Criticism of Music Journalism Practices

In addition to specific decisions, Rolling Stone has faced criticism for its overall approach to music journalism:

1. Lack of Objectivity

Rolling Stone has often been accused of bias in its reviews and coverage, leading to questions about its integrity:

- Conflict of Interest: The magazine's close relationships with certain artists and record labels have raised concerns about the objectivity of its reviews.
- Puff Pieces vs. Critical Analysis: Critics argue that Rolling Stone sometimes opts for "puff pieces" that fail to provide a critical examination of the music and its impact.

2. Overemphasis on Celebrity Culture

As the music industry has evolved, Rolling Stone has been criticized for placing too much emphasis on celebrity culture at the expense of musical artistry:

- Shallow Coverage: The focus on celebrity lifestyles and scandals often overshadows meaningful discussions about the music itself and the societal issues it addresses.
- Failure to Address Systemic Issues: Rolling Stone has been criticized for not adequately addressing issues such as racism, sexism, and exploitation within the music industry, which are crucial to understanding the broader cultural context.

The Future of Rolling Stone

As Rolling Stone navigates the complexities of the modern music landscape, it faces the challenge of reconciling its historical legacy with contemporary cultural realities. Here are some considerations for its future:

- Embracing Diversity: Moving forward, Rolling Stone must prioritize inclusivity in its coverage, ensuring that voices from all genres and backgrounds are represented.
- Evolving Rankings: Updating its ranking criteria to reflect the changing dynamics of the music industry will help the magazine remain relevant and respected.
- Commitment to Quality Journalism: Upholding journalistic integrity and providing critical, in-depth

analysis of music and its cultural significance will solidify Rolling Stone's place as a leading authority in music journalism.

Conclusion

While Rolling Stone has played a pivotal role in shaping music journalism, its history is not without missteps. From controversial album rankings and questionable cover choices to overlooking influential artists and facing criticism for its journalism practices, the magazine has made decisions that have sparked debate and dissent. However, the evolution of music and culture continues, and Rolling Stone has the opportunity to learn from its past to create a more inclusive and representative future in music journalism.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are some of the worst decisions in music history according to Rolling Stone?

Rolling Stone has highlighted various decisions such as artists signing detrimental contracts, poor album releases, or ill-timed tours that resulted in financial losses or damaged reputations.

Which artist's decision to sell their catalog was deemed a worst decision by Rolling Stone?

Rolling Stone pointed out that some artists regretted selling their music catalogs, as they lost control over their own work and missed out on potential future earnings.

What specific album release does Rolling Stone consider a major misstep?

Rolling Stone often cites the release of 'Chinese Democracy' by Guns N' Roses as a major misstep due to its long development time and mixed critical reception.

How did poor management decisions impact artists according to Rolling Stone?

Poor management decisions, such as failing to secure proper tours or promotional support, have led to artists missing out on significant opportunities and revenue, as discussed by Rolling Stone.

Which major label decision is highlighted as one of the worst by Rolling

Stone?

Rolling Stone has criticized major labels for dropping successful artists over minor disputes or low sales during a transitional phase, which often led to the artists achieving greater success elsewhere.

What infamous collaboration does Rolling Stone label as a bad decision?

The collaboration between Metallica and Lou Reed on the album 'Lulu' is frequently mentioned by Rolling Stone as a miscalculation that confused fans and critics alike.

Can you name a controversial reality show decision that Rolling Stone criticized?

Rolling Stone criticized the decision of several artists to participate in reality TV shows, arguing that it often diluted their artistic integrity and public image.

What did Rolling Stone say about artists reuniting for tours?

Rolling Stone has noted that some artists' decisions to reunite for tours, often after long periods of estrangement, have resulted in disappointing performances and backlash from fans.

How has Rolling Stone described the impact of social media on musicians' decisions?

Rolling Stone has discussed how social media can lead artists to make impulsive decisions regarding public statements or releases, sometimes resulting in negative backlash or career setbacks.

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