Your Name

Instructor Name

Course Number

Date

Title: Does Pitchfork’s online review culture cater to the sensibilities of white, middle-class men? If so, what are the implications of this?

**Introduction**

Print media is one of the most powerful tools to disseminate information about various items to the general public. Print media is a sourc3e of information for not only the general public but also the critics and the experts. Even the experienced professionals sitting in the offices and their fields of expertise get information about various issues and current affairs through print media. Print media includes several items like newspapers, magazines, brochures, etc. Magazines are one of the most important components of the print media. It is the sort of a periodical publication that is composed of illustrations and articles that are published by keeping in mind a particular subject or a particular audience. Some magazines provide insight about the politics or the current affairs of the country, some magazines provide information about the economics of the while some provide information about the happenings in the future like astrological magazines and the horoscopic journals. In addition to this, there are many magazines or journals in the print media that are dedicated to providing reviews and insights about various pieces of work in the electronic media. To be more precise, sich magazines provide reviews and opinions of various critics and other experts in the area of electronic media. They provide information about the other forms of art like fils, dramas, TV series, songs, and music albums. One of such magazines is Pitchfork.

Pitchfork is an online magazine that is based in Chicago, Illinois. This American magazine was launched by Ryan Schreiber in 1995 and is currently owned by Conde Nast. The main purpose or aim of this magazine is to review and comment on the various kinds of music being produced in the American music industry currently and provide suggestions that how to improve the mistakes and shortcomings in the discussion piece of music. Although the magazine provides expert reviews and opinions on every kind of music, the main genres on which it focuses are indie pop, indie, and popular music. Along with reviewing the music and music albums that are currently popular in the music industry, the magazine also provides the services pf music studio to its clients. Along with all this, Pitchfork is a very popular concert and event organizer.

The American online music review magazine has always been under severe criticism that it promotes biasness. The online magazine is called a “men’s publications” a number of times in various articles and webinars. The articles and blogs published on the website of the magazine are usually based upon the new or the latest music in the market but the critics have reported seeing the old content on the official site as well. If the rumors are to be believed, Pitchfork journalists have extensively published already published data and reviewed re-issues and the old box sets. It has been extensively observed that since 2016, the online music reviewer has constantly provided retrospective reviews of the already publishes articles or classical or otherwise important albums. The magazine has developed a reputation of being a flag-bearer for all kinds of music, especially independent music but the reality shows some other picture. The magazine has extensively focused on only two genres that are indie and pop music. Recent criticisms on the magazine subscribing to a certain demographic are arguably true as a number of reasons show that *Pitchfork’s online review culture caters more to the sensibilities of white, middle-class men, which consequently impacts the visibility of people of color in independent music*

**Discussion**

*General Criticism and Reach*

It can be said without any doubt or second thought that Pitchfork is currently one of the most technologically innovative websites in the whole United States. The credit of all these goes to the Cover Stories. The term "cover stories" is new to many people; in fact, these are the attractive and online features that have been created as a result;lt of inspiration from the physical magazines. These cover stories are usually placed for a limited period or a short span of time and are composed of visually appealing and picture-heavy layouts. In addition to this, these stories also include a combination and interaction of digital technology (Cardew).

Pitchfork was a magazine or periodical at was started by its founder, Ryan Schreiber, in the basement of his home 18 years ago. He had just graduated from high school at that time. Within no time, the magazine became the most talked-about sensation in the music world of the United States. Currently, Pitchfork is one of the most influential voices in the musical circles of not only the United States of America but the whole world as well. The popularity of this online music reviewer can be judged by its daily traffic. According to multiple sources, the website receives a reader input of more than 240000 on a daily basis. The monthly traffic of the website is approximately more than 1.5 million unique visitors per month. All these features combine to make the online magazine as the most popular independent-focused music publication online.

Pitchfork holds the privilege of publishing the reviews on the earliest basis, as soon as the album rolls out in the market or the music video is released.no other magazine takes cush a quick action or publishes the data about the music album just like Pitchfork does. The online publisher is also famous for presenting the most unique and unpredictable reviews about the music album that has recently come into the market. Online music reviewer has a reputation for truly reflecting the true and honest views of the reviewer himself or herself and not tempering with the personal opinions. However, Pitchfork has repeatedly faced criticism for presenting only a certain type of data or views in its publications. The music reviewer is said to hold white-dude-centrism and publish most of the data on white singers and video makers. Although the publisher clearly rejects all such accusations and claims to represent the singers from all communities and races, the public opinion speaks a different language. The magazine has also taken steps to reject all these criticism. The first and foremost step in order to prove its innocence is the diversification of its bylines. Moreover, the popular online magazine has also stepped up its coverage of identity, race, and gender.

**Insight into the Demographics**

As already discussed, the online music reviewer is extremely popular not only in the musical circles of the country but at a global level. However, the facts unveiled by Santarpia reveal that Pitchfork’s actual value lies not in the ability to reach all the music fans in the world but to a specific segment or group of people. This observation has especially been made by keeping in mind the facts and figures focused by the current owner of the magazine, Conde Nast. According to multiple reviews or replies on the fact, this specific segment or the group accounts for most of the audience or visitors at the site. Pitchfork itself ran a poll among its readers in 2012, that asked them to suggest their favorite music that would be released in the coming 15 years. The results of this poll were shocking; most of the respondents of this poll (88 percent) were males and so were the winners of the poll. Another set of meaningful data reveled by Quantcast shows that most of the people visiting the site were males, more than 82%, while the female visitors only accounted for 12 to 15 percent of the visitors (Cardew). Additional information revealed by the same analysts revealed that the ages of most of the readers ranged between 18 and 34 years (Kornhaber).

"The People's List" of Pitchfork magazine also portrays the gender demographics in the voting process on a large scale. It revealed that the percentage of female voters in the whole process was only 12%. This was a shocking fact for almost all the experts and the readers in the industry. This greatly outraged the feminists in the reading circles of the magazine and cries of sexism erupted from many directions. The advocates of feminism recorded their protest in on many platforms including blogs, webinars, professional articles and especially the comment section of the magazine (Jyarvin). While these results shocked many people especially the critics and readers who regularly followed the magazine, many people found the results to be completely normal and fair. According to these people, no matter how much inclusiveness the indie music and its fans claim to have the aforementioned genre is mostly occupied and pre-dominated by males, and that also the white males. Undeniable proof of this dominance can be seen in the Billboard rankings of the music albums, where the male artists capture nine of the top ten positions in the rankings. Another sad fact is that most of the genres of western music are heavily dominated by males; female presence in the industry can be seen very rarely (Ezell). The votes cast in the pole are a clear proof that most of the readers of the music review magazine are males and that also white, which definitely does not represent the whole readership or the all the readers as a whole.

According to a large number of readers (27,891 to be precise), who participated in the voting procedure in the polls conducted between 2012-2018, most of them observed a clear and similar pattern over all these years. These readers or voters observed in the majority that the top ten lists in all these years mostly consisted of males, with the exception of only two young females in recent years, Régine and Sarah, who were included in the Arcade Fire. One of the other shocking facts that were observed and shared by the readers was that most of these males that captured the top ten positions were white. Even if the research is expanded upto the top 20s, not much difference is seen. As a matter of fact, if the top 20 picks of the past 15 years are considered, not a single solo female artist was listed and there were only just two bands that had female members; the XX and Arcade Fire. Unfortunately, these bands also contained a number of males as compared to the females (Wallace). But these rankings do not imply that females have a bad taste in music or the band members are straight away misogynist. In fact, most of the people like and appreciate the top 20s list of the music reviewer and lie to listen to it on repeat mode. Similarly, if the sales of the music albums are seen in the same period of the past 15 years, many women can bee seen in the top 10 lists. But most of these are pop artists like Beyoncé, Britney Spears and Carrie Underwood, which cannot be considered in the musical charts like this (Wallace).

If the music journalism and Pitchfork are considered in general, the fact that music industry and charts are heavily dominated by the males does not come as a shocker to most of the people. The shocking or surprising thing for these readers is that a number of females can be seen in the music industry, and most of the work they are doing is amazingly good, then why it is not getting mentioned at any platform or comes in the limelight (Wagner).

**Conclusion**

Hence, in a nutshell, it can be concluded that undoubtedly there are females present in the western music industry an most of them are making pretty good music, still, they do not get any fame or even representation at various platforms. Even though many publications including popular magazines, webinars, blogs, and websites claim to represent the female talent equally and give equal space to the female singers just like the male performers, the readers present a different view. A most prominent example can be seen in the form of the popular music-review magazine, Pitchfork. Although the online magazine claims to promote equality and shun gender biasedness, the figures and statistics of the website tell a different story. The statistics shared by popular website trackers, most of the regular readers of the online magazine are males and a large percentage of visitors are also males. If the top ten charts from the last 15 years are considered, almost no female singer can be found in the whole list, which is a sad fact. The magazine has also received a lot of criticism in this respect and it has vowed to Improve this scenario.

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