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Putting Her on the Shelf

Pop star fragrances and post-feminist entrepreneurialism

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Abstract

This article analyzes discourse around pop stars Katy Perry and Nicki Minaj as fragrance spokeswomen. It mobilizes the term “post-feminist entrepreneurialism” to describe business strategies for female recording artists representing themselves as workers and capitalist subjects through the endorsement of mass-produced, hegemonically feminine consumer products that exploit individual brands to engender feelings of proximity and empowerment in consumers. Because such entrepreneurial efforts extend female pop stars' industrial viability, post-feminist entrepreneurialism is defined through a critical reclamation of “shelf life,” or the timespan that a commodity can be stored before it spoils. This concept is meaningful for female celebrities who embody the passage of time in complex ways and defend themselves against industrial and cultural perceptions of their own disposability. Post-feminist entrepreneurialism describes the contradiction between empowerment and the erasure of agency for such media

professionals. Thus “shelf life” metaphorizes the affective registers embedded within the consumption of endorsed products and the demands placed on female pop stars to sell normatively feminine ancillary properties.

Keywords::

post-feminist entrepreneurialism perfume labor stardom music

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Alyxandra Vesey is a feminist media scholar who uses industry and production studies approaches to explore the relationship(s) between gender, labor, and music. Her dissertation analyzes identity and music-based intermediary practices in post-network television. Her work has appeared in *Antenna*, *Flow*, *In Media Res*, *The Moving Image*, *Cinema Journal*, *Studies in French Cinema*, and *Saturday Night Live and American TV*. She is also an editor for *Antenna* and *The Velvet Light Trap*. E-mail: vesey@wisc.edu.

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