



Elton John

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British musician Elton John:

- famous queer celebrity
- interesting personality
- Britishness, Whiteness, Masculinity
- extravagant lifestyle

Why is this interesting for celebrity studies?

Elton John is a perfect example for important topics in celebrity studies, such as camp, queer studies and so on. He also, besides his age, is very active on social media and does not hesitate to show us his opinion, which makes him also an example for using the media to help certain groups or to point out their situations (such as queer people or people infected by AIDS).

“Cause what the hell is wrong with expressing yourself, trying to be me?”
Elton John

1.) Elton John – a queer icon?

Queer as activism (Aids activism)

- fight against predominant images of HIV and Aids (Elton John Aids Found.)
- questioning usual ideas; coming-out in the 70's (seen as a scandal, *“I think everybody's bisexual to a certain degree.”* Elton John, Rolling Stones Magazine, 1976)
- repeal of a clear, settled, natural identity
- married to his husband (David Furnish) and having two kids

Gender

- diversity + identity (appearance, behaviour...)
- gender as a stylization of the body
- “performative” (Jagose, 107-120)

Context

Elton John is truly one of the greatest musicians and performers of all time. Not only his music, but also his commitment to fighting Aids or supporting the rights of queer people, make him an extraordinary celebrity.

In this project, I wanted to focus my research on his extravagant lifestyle and appearance. Furthermore, I wanted to look at him as a queer celebrity. During my research, I came across the term “camp”, which immediately caught my attention. I read Susan Sontag's *Notes on Camp* and was fascinated, how this “behaviour,” or should I say lifestyle, fits Elton John. So it was clear to me, that this would be another key term for my project.

My analysis focused on Elton John's Instagram account and also on a few pictures of his most famous outfits over the years. This helped me very much, especially regarding the theme of camp and digital representation.

“One should either be a work of art, or wear a work of art.”
Phrases & Philosophies for the Use of the Young

“Better to build a bridge than a wall.”
Elton John



2.) Elton John and “camp” (based on Susan Sontag's work on “camp”)

- love of the unnatural/exaggerating
- self-identification
- mode of aestheticism

Elton as a person of camp:

John's exaggerated clothes (“male showgirl”)

- clothes as a big part of camp
- „dress made of three million feathers” (Sontag, 283)
- still today / in an inconsistent and unpassionate way ≠ camp

Staying true to his character

- Glorification of character, always himself
- Homosexuals as bearers of the taste of camp (aristocrats of camp), but camp ≠ homosexual taste
- “Being-as-playing-a-role” (Sontag 280)
- enjoying camp / love for personal style / “humor and flamboyance (...) at the core of his wardrobe” (Hlaing)

John's scandals

- camp rests on innocence (discloses and corrupts it)

3.) Digital representation (analysis of his Instagram account)

Important terms:

- direct control of one's image
- “parasocial” interaction
- passing opinions
- presentational media
- burden of responsibility
- direct access to established celebs for the audience

Elton John's social media image

- supporting queer rights, promoting events
- Elton John Aids Foundation, informing and talking about it
- Enjoyment of camp is visible (extraordinary outfits)
- “homemade” content, John and his husband
- Exoticism, Exclusivity (Qualities)
- Political, religious
- Pictures/Selfies with celebrity friends (Lady Gaga, Dua Lipa, Olly Alexander,...)

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