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Instagram Live: The Good, the Bad, the Ugly

Emma Jaber, Arts & Entertainment Editor

“Hate” is a strong word, so I’m going to try not to use it. There is a chance that Instagram Live serves its purpose, and I’m sure there are redeeming qualities within the platform. However, I have been left questioning why such a high percentage of the people I follow on Instagram have taken social distancing measures as an invitation to go live. So, I’ll just come right out and say it: I don’t like Instagram Live!

I think Instagram stories are great; I love sharing them, and I am willing to bet that I probably go through stories more frequently than I scroll through my main feed. They seem more current, and since they’re less permanent than the pictures dedicated to one’s profile, people are more willing to post less curated, seemingly more real photos, musings, etc.

Then comes Instagram Live. I think livestreams serve their purpose in a few key areas—one being workout classes, especially right now when in-person classes are not an option. Live classes can add structure to your day and feel like you’re still attending a class somewhere other than your living room, which breaks up the pace of a day in quarantine. Besides that, I call into question the usefulness of livestreams.

I think the musings of influencers (specifically) are far less interesting on live, because the weird lag time they take to answer the third variation of the same question just makes it awkward and less efficient. I guess one could argue it’s more raw or honest, but they just become a little drawn out and boring. You can join a live whenever it is still live, meaning you could’ve missed half of what has already been said, and when it’s more of a Q&A style, who’s to say if your question has already been answered? I find it awkward and uncomfortable, and now that everyone is socially isolated, everyone has something to say, and for some reason they have to say it via Instagram Live! Share your voice! I am not here to silence you, but maybe don’t commit your thoughts to Instagram in real time.

The comments and reactions at the bottom of the Live screen also really get to me for some reason. I can’t decide if I should read along with the incessant stream of questions or comments or just listen to the stream. It’s almost anxiety-inducing, and most of the comments disappear before they can be answered—it just seems like a whole mess. The incessant disappearing comments somehow make me feel bad for those asking them, and it negates the honesty of a livestream in some ways. The hearts on the side constantly floating up to the top of the screen also seem so unnecessary, I’m not sure why they’re there. If people like the live, they’ll stay, so the heart feature just emulates live likes I guess? I don’t get it.

Don’t get me wrong, the human connection aspect of social media is definitely something to be celebrated, especially in times like these. I just don’t think that connection is always in its best form when on Instagram Live. Maybe I’m just not following the right people or I’m watching the most awkward livestreams, but with that experience emerged my disdain. There may be undiscovered versatility on the platform, but I’ve taken notice of its downfalls as well.

