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5-28-2021

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Recommended Citation

Garza, Ethan, "Olivia Rodrigo Is the Moment: A Pop Star's Rise to Fame" (2021). *The Spectator Online*. 342.
<https://scholarworks.seattleu.edu/spectator-online/342>

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Olivia Rodrigo is The Moment: A Pop Star's Rise to Fame

Ethan Garza, Volunteer Reporter

It seems like just yesterday we finally got “drivers license” out of our heads. On May 21, Olivia Rodrigo dropped her debut album, “Sour” and is gaining success at record-breaking speed. Rodrigo’s single, “good 4 u” sits at number one on the Billboard Global 200, her third leading single after “drivers license,” which maintained the number one spot for 8 weeks. Due to the overwhelmingly positive response to “Sour,” many people are asking how a young, inspiring artist has gotten so popular in such a short period.

Olivia Rodrigo was born Feb. 20, 2003, in Temecula, Calif. From there, she began training at a young age, receiving vocal and piano lessons starting in kindergarten. She added guitar to her musical catalog at 12-years-old.

Later on, she auditioned and searched for roles until she caught her big break on Disney Channel’s “Bizaardvark,” where she played Paige Olvera. Three years later, she landed the lead role of Nini Salazar-Roberts in the Disney+ series “High School Musical: The Musical: The Series” (HSMTMTS).

Rodrigo’s prominent acting career did not stop her from pursuing her dream of singing. In HSMTMTS, her singing skills are showcased through her role as Nini. When the show’s producers learned that Rodrigo could sing, they invited her to work on creating some of the music on the show. The song “all I want” from HSMTMTS was a big hit, and has made the top 100 songs in the US and Canada.

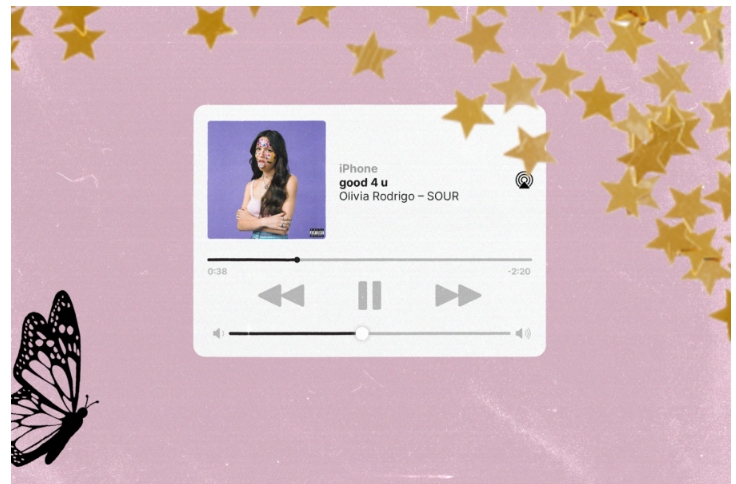
After the first season of the show, Rodrigo dedicated more of her time to making music when she first released her single “drivers license.” She then dropped two more singles, “good 4 u” and “Deja vu,” both landing a spot on Billboard’s top 10.

At the beginning of the album, her first track “brutal” starts with distorted guitars and heavy bass, signifying the beginning of her breakup. Seattle University second-year Environmental Studies student, Dani Kutulas, named “brutal” as her favorite song of the album because of the rock influence.

The same can be said for Katelynn Jurado, a third-year communications student at the University of Texas at San Antonio. Jurado said she liked “brutal” so much because she could relate to it more. What she enjoyed most about the album overall was the “genre-bending” style.

“I expected more of a Taylor Swift style, by not wanting to stick within one genre... not just sticking into one pop aspect,” Jurado said.

The next track, “traitor,” is more mellow, as if all the raw anger had left her body, leaving her with nothing but her mind to think of how the relationship could have fallen apart. Now contemplative, she sees that her ex has started to date someone new immediately after their breakup. By now, she puts the pieces of the puzzle together to see that although he might have not cheated on her, he is still a traitor.



Kim Nucum

Oddly enough, this song is not filled with much anger, but rather more disappointment and sadness. Anahi Martinez, a second-year communication studies major at the University of Houston resonated especially with this track.

“This is my favorite song,” Martinez said about “traitor.” “I went through a very similar situation not too long ago.”

After that is “drivers license” followed by “1 step forward, 3 steps back.” Both of these tracks play an important role in Rodrigo’s finding herself, trying to cope with the fact that the man she has given so much energy to is no longer part of her world.

Through the lyric “am I pretty, am I fun boy. I hate that I give you power over that kinda stuff,” It’s hard to not feel sympathy for Rodrigo, providing nostalgia for high school relationships.

The next three tracks, “good 4 u” “deja vu” and “enough for you,” are all following her path of seeing her ex continue to do the same things they did with his new girlfriend, and is now happy without her. She questions what she did wrong in her relationship, and battles with emotional trauma, losing faith in herself through lyrics like “Tried so hard to be everything that you liked, Just for you to say you’re not the compliment type.”

Rodrigo stays at this stage of her life for the next three songs, “jealousy, jealousy,” “favorite crime” and “hope ur ok.” Instead of feeling angry at herself, Rodrigo moves her anger towards her ex and starts to realize that she did not do anything wrong, acknowledging that while she still has some feelings for him, she needs to get over him for her own sake.

The last song “hope you’re ok” changes in direction, focusing on the perspectives of others, specifically her friends. In this song, she focuses on the hardships that everyone endures, reminding us to remember to stay proud of ourselves.

One reason why Rodrigo is so popular right now is how relatable teenagers have found her music.

“They are relatable to a lot of people, especially teenagers, it made me look back on high school,” Kutulas said.

Martinez found a similar quality in Rodrigo’s work.

“The fact that Olivia put my exact feelings on paper and then made it into a song is something I cannot appreciate enough,” Martinez said. “She reminds me that other people go through the same situations, and heartbreak is temporary.”

Social media has also popularized her music. TikTok had her music constantly featured and was used quite regularly by people who create content on the app.

Social media has played an important role in getting other young and new artists, such as Billie Eilish to gain extreme popularity in such a short time. e. Whatever the case may be, Rodrigo’s career does not look like it is slowing down anytime soon, people are already anticipating her next step.

As far as a tour is concerned, Jurado is hoping for a live show.

“I definitely want her to tour, but I know with the state of the world right now it is going to be hard,” Jurado said.