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Amelia Carey
Seattle University

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She's a Massive Deal: Examining the Success of Reneé Rapp

Amelia Carey, Volunteer Reporter

Lately, Reneé Rapp has been at the top of her game on social media, and the news outlets are reflecting that. Clips from her interviews and public appearances have been heavily circulating on the internet, and the fans are loving her.

Rapp plays the iconic character Regina George in the new musical/film adaptation of "Mean Girls." This role is not a new one for her; beginning in 2019 she played Regina on Broadway. Rapp is also well-known for her role as Leighton Murray in HBO's "The Sex Lives of College Girls," her solo singing career and even a viral video depicting an incident where she escorted Drew Barrymore away from an alleged stalker.



Luca Del Carlo

One of the unique aspects of Rapp's career is her Broadway experience. Many of her fans who were interviewed seem to have discovered her from her Broadway days and have theater backgrounds themselves.

Raine Huber, a Reneé Rapp fan with singing and theater experience, provided insight into the singer's appeal. Huber discovered Rapp from her "Mean Girls" musical days and humorously said that they have been "hooked ever since."

"I definitely think that her background in theater has gotten her to how she is able to perform," Huber said. "It's nice to hear people belt that high but having it be safe."

Singers without that theater experience sometimes turn to "scream belting," ("screlting", as Huber called it) which is dangerous for the vocal cords.



Renee Rapp in concert at the Paramount. (Genny Sheara)

Seattle University Second-year, Hope Onstad, who is a singer and music minor, concurs.

“She’s a very healthy singer,” Onstad agreed. “She sings with her stomach, her diaphragm, a lot.”

Another Broadway-esque trait is her ability to dominate the stage. Multiple sources commented on her excellent stage presence and how seeing her in concert swayed them to become more invested in her music. Onstad described Rapp’s performance as bouncy, ethereal, angelic and also floaty.

Huber described the song “Snow Angel.”

“Vocally, it was very timid, very quiet, and then she goes to this beautiful belting part which is very strong and powerful. It just makes me happy. It kinda gives the energy of ‘Vampire’ by Olivia Rodrigo.”

Onstad’s favorite song of hers is “Gemini Moon.”

“I just think it’s so satisfying. Like the way the chord progressions build and how she changes the dynamics throughout.” (For people who didn’t know, dynamics are the variations in loudness in music.)

Another likable trait is her sense of humor and ability to connect with the audience.

“She’s a little ball of chaos in how she talks sometimes,” Huber said.

After getting into Rapp’s music a few weeks before a trip to New York City, Fourth-year Media and Communication Major Callie Solberg actually met Rapp in person.

“She was super friendly—she gave me a hug right away and was asking about how my trip was.”

She said that Rapp has an overall energy of unapologetically being herself and, overall, just being very grounded in her identity. Solberg thinks that younger people can relate to and admire Rapp for those reasons.

Solberg also saw her concert at the Paramount, second row.

“She has a very interesting and fun dynamic, I thought, with the crowd.”

Second-year student Mars Nelson was able to see Rapp on Broadway and also experienced her in concert. They said that she is very interactive with the fans and personable. Nelson also shared that Rapp was setting up girls in the crowd who were holding signs saying that they were looking for girlfriends and even recognized some of the fans from past concerts.

Besides Rapp’s talent, she’s also very open about her queerness and uses that to connect with her audience. Huber commented that some queer artists use their platforms to be more universal, instead of specifically reaching out to the queer community. Reneé Rapp doesn’t shy away from her queerness, which also helps her establish a community with fans.

“The themes that she deals with are really interesting, especially exploring sexuality,” Solberg said.

Overall, everything about Renee Rapp seems to make the fans happy. She's friendly, confident, lyrically and vocally talented, openly queer and a fascinating online presence. While only time will tell, new and old fans alike hope to see her popularity continue to rise as the year progresses. Many can anticipate the evolution of Renee Rapp.