



## Comment

# Posh enough to protest?

**Robyn McKeown**  
Editor



I have come into contact with a fair bit of dialogue about how 'common' girls dress up, and 'posh' girls dress down. Being from Liverpool, I have witnessed some evidence of this: the Liverpool girls role model is certainly more Cheryl Cole than Kate Middleton. (By no means am I calling my vibrant, culturally rich home city common, but it is true it is rather north of the home counties, and there are plenty of tanned lovelies with long hair and a severe lack of Jack Wills.) Having spent my youth accessorising my high street dresses to make them look a million dollars, I got a bit of a shock when I ran into girls in my seminars carrying around five thousand pounds worth of handbag but who hadn't even brushed their hair.

I had never been on a march before I started University. I had never joined any kind of protest, in fact, I had never even met anyone else who had either. Coincidence or not, these unbrushed hair girls were the same lot who first thrust fliers into my hands for one meeting or march or another. As a 'finding myself' first year, I went along and tried quite a few - certainly I knew a lot about the world pissed me off, but I had never had anyone sit down with me and label that as 'Socialist' or 'Feminist'. And it was a revelation, a whole world I never knew existed. Although - I more or less ran crying from that first Socialist Worker's Party meeting. I now know I don't have to dress the same as the collective in order to identify as socialist, and that the majority of lovely leftys I meet don't give a crap what I wear, but as a more impressionable nineteen year old I crumpled under the steely glares that my lip gloss and flowery dress drew from the booted and bereted ensemble.

Relaxing a little into myself, and finding a few more 'me' groups (the

LGBT and feminist crowd were particularly welcoming and often came with cake, albeit normally vegan, but still yummy) and I joined my first few protests. The empowerment I felt being surrounded by those strong enough to stand up and fight against the injustices that I used to just let irk me whilst sitting at home, was amazing. And yet, as I identified more and more with left wing ideologies, the more meetings, debates, or marches I attended, the more I experienced the odd little feeling that I had failed some kind of test; a pointed look or a glance when I dared to ask who a certain politician was, or erred in my first attempts at consensus decision making.

This certainly intensified when I had my first lefty crush; when I finally got asked out for a drink I wore my favourite dress, cue "You like nice, did you make this?" Well, no, actually it was from Topshop. Visibly taken aback by my response, my date proceeded to spend the evening telling me what a despicable human being I was for supporting disgusting capitalist driven sweatshop supported industries. Fair enough point, as there is a lot wrong with many high street stores production set ups, a lot wrong. But I don't agree that I am solely responsible for that, or that for all his second-hand-clothes good intentions, he wasn't supporting any better an industry than I every time he handed over twenty quid to his local drug dealer.

I'm aware many readers will find my examples of clothes, or unbrushed hair, to be trivial and even irrelevant as factors in the wider political movement, but they tell us so much more than you might think. It is the personal little things that we do on the day to day that still divide us all into some kind of 'class' - whether we like it or not.

The ripples from Thatcher's stamp down on the trade Unions during the '80s are still doing damage. Harsh action against those well organised and articulate protestors forced the working class leaders into submission - or at the

very least quieted them with near poverty. (I'm making a few sweeping statements here but I am going along the lines that we have at least all seen Billy Elliot or some such trope, and know Thatcher dicked over the miners, to name but one group of many.) This left only the well educated middle classes, who had the resources i.e. the time and money to keep fighting the good fight. And so we end with a pretty confused state of affairs - including an army of 'middle class militants' marching against the very politicians they shared a desk with in school.

So it tends to be those with the private means, private education or the well connected parents that are fighting for the rights of the 'common man' - despite being so far removed from common values it is almost laughable. And the fact that the protests against cuts or increased tuition fees (even if they end in violence) originate in defending education for all rather than just the privileged, it is the average *Daily Mail* reader - whom the increase in fees is fucking over the most - that finds the most satisfaction in the arrest of the 'posh kid protestors'. (Check the MailOnline or MEN website comments beneath protest articles if you don't believe me.) And whilst the racism and blatant islamophobia of the EDL marching in Manchester a few years back sickened me, so did the laughter of the students who sneered at the spelling mistakes on the EDL banners.

Left activism is disproportionately populated by the middle classes, and whilst it would be a mistake to criticise anyone for being on the correct side, it is evidence that the more politically empowered need to be doing more to share their empowerment. Don't 'fight for the common man!' whilst laughing at his ignorance, or the fact he is wearing burberry or whatever the latest chav stereotype is. Fight for a system that includes, empowers and educates everyone.

## HOT HEAD

### Spotify is dead. Long live Spotify!

Alex Lynham

I have had it up to fucking here with people slagging off the recent changes to Spotify's terms of use. "Wah wah wah, I don't get free on-demand music anymore" - do you realise how spoiled you sound? The service has been changed because Spotify was losing money, and not just a little bit of money, but £16.6 million pounds. Recently they passed a milestone of having one million subscribers, or about fifteen percent of its total active user base, and yet they are still losing money. They are a business, and they had to change their terms of use in order to survive. With the paid-up service, you can stream to a mobile device with no advertisements, and all for the price of three pints at the pub (or, to be fair, six in the union). That's incredible value.

More interesting perhaps is the piracy argument: "Now Spotify is charging, I'll go and illegally download instead - that's lost money to the artists!" No, it's not. Lady Gaga reportedly makes a paltry £30k a year from streaming revenues, and she's the biggest artist in the world right now. At a digital insider brief at the MIDEM conference in Cannes, figures were released

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that suggested a fan base of 105,000 regular streaming fans listening to an artist's record on a frequent basis with a one-and-a-half year record cycle were required to make a minimum-wage level income from streaming. Lest we forget, there's more than one person in a band, and there are families, agents and all the necessary detritus that comes with the industry that are going to need paying. In sum: your streams are not making anybody any money.

"Surely some money from

streaming is better than no money?" Well, I'll admit you have me there. Except if you really wanted to support artists then you'd pay the tenner, and there's the kicker - not many people actually love music. Lots of people say they do, but basic economic concepts like price elasticity and opportunity cost expose them as liars. Spotify now costs £10 per month. All those who don't value the service will leave, as there is a high price elasticity of demand.

I'm prepared to concede that the service rather than the music might be at fault, so let's use a more concrete example: the CD (or Vinyl LP). A CD from a band you like is five pounds; you're interested. £10? Not so much.

Ultimately, real music fans want to support the art and artists they love, whether that means buying a CD or buying merch like t-shirts; there's always going to be a small market of people who demand these things. The key is that those who will leave Spotify on account of £10 per month for more music than they could ever want or need aren't really music fans at all, and it fucks me off that anybody could get self-righteous because for a little while they chose to get something for nothing semi-legally rather than outright illegally. Well done, give yourself a pat on the back.

### “Don't worry there's still one prince left!”

Jessie Cohen

On 29 April, over two billion people from around the world stepped into a fairytale book. Champagne goggles donned by 11am, we watched wide-eyed as the balding prince and his Stepford-perfect princess reenacted the 'happily ever after' ending of '90s Disney films on live television. For 24 hours we transformed our living rooms into what could on any other day be mistaken for a BNP suite and gawked at the sheer bombastic pomp of it all. To feed our obsession, BBC reporters spent the day spewing clichés about the genuine love that the couple shared and, like the rest of the national and international press, focused their attention on the flawless Barbie bride: "It was a modern image for a modern monarchy as Kate Middleton walked down the aisle and into history."

Modern my size 12 arse. Apart from Kate's refusal to 'obey' William in her marriage vows, she has done little to secure a modern woman's future. Anyone who dares to voice criticism of the Royal wedding is immediately dubbed churlish and unpatriotic but from a feminist standpoint, this was a sad day for the future of female icons. It is well known that

Kate first got the prince to notice her by wearing designer underwear to a university fashion show. And now, her interest in pursuing photography has lapsed and she will be make her career from being a good wife, supporting her husband. It will be her duty to have children, and she knows that they will have no choice in their future careers.

Kate is hardly setting a high bar for female aspirations. Instead of setting the standard, as a woman supposedly 'just like you or me' without a drop of royal blood in

her family, she stands today as a crass advertisement to fellow women that anyone can become a princess - a vacuous aspiration bolstered by royal wedding merchandise such as the union jack handbags plastered that read: "Don't worry there's still one prince left!"

So there we have it. For a day the world went bananas for a woman and her gown, and with the perfect princess look and lifestyle back in fashion, feminism gets another good kick in the teeth.

