

## GINA PICCALO

### Miley Cyrus: Genius?

by Gina Piccalo



**As she promotes her new movie, *The Last Song*, Cyrus has trashed Twitter, taken on MSNBC, and cheered for the freakiest *American Idol* contestant—like a normal 17-year-old should.**

If you listen closely to Miley Cyrus these days—and this speed-talking pop star does demand active listening—it's clear that she's pretty stoked about being nearly emancipated from her Disney-fied adolescence. She's showing an awful lot of leg in those ubiquitous short-shorts. The nose piercing, the tattoo, the black nail polish, the hippie jewelry, and that tough girl slouch all drive home the point: *Hannah Montana* has become strictly a day job.

It's a rapidly expiring one, as well. In five weeks, Cyrus casts off that blond wig for the last time. (Though the series doesn't finally bow until spring 2011.) And it couldn't come any sooner. She is, after all, just seven months away from 18—it's no surprise that Cyrus can hardly stomach the sparkly pink *Hannah Montana* get-ups anymore. Billion-dollar franchise or not. "I can't breathe looking like that anymore," she told *Parade* magazine, recently.

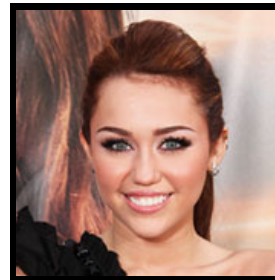
Cyrus somehow escaped the showbiz trap of manufactured personality and preserved a genuineness that is very hard to fake.

Maybe that's a good thing. A new Miley Cyrus is starting to surface. One who abruptly quit Twitter with 2 million followers, because "it wastes your life." One who's reading up on Buddhism and supports gay marriage, despite her Southern Baptist roots. One who readily challenges *American Idol*'s Simon Cowell (albeit backstage). One who swipes back at the critics—namely MSNBC's *Morning Joe* pundit Mika Brzezinski—of her now infamous Teen Choice Awards performance with, "Dude, if you think dancing on top of an ice-cream cart with a pole is bad then go check what 90 percent of the high-schoolers are really up to."

And though her new film, *The Last Song*, won't catapult her into moviemaking history, it does cast Cyrus against type as an especially bratty piano prodigy with a penchant for shoplifting. If all that doesn't get your attention, there's the title of her forthcoming album: *I Can't Be Tamed*.

Apparently that topless shot in Vanity Fair a couple years ago was just a warmup.

Cyrus has always seemed strikingly self-possessed. And she's never been especially demure. Just last week, she gamely recounted for Jay Leno her first meeting with *Last Song* co-star and current boyfriend Liam Hemsworth. They met for the first time at a Starbucks, which, Cyrus told Leno, is the sort of thing co-stars do when they'll have to spend weeks making out. But it sounded less like a business meeting and more like the pop star was casting boyfriends. "He opened the door and was like, 'Hi. I'm Liam,' and I was like, 'All right! Good! I like it! Let's go!'" There was a touch of Lucille Ball-style bravado in her delivery that was



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somehow refreshing.

No doubt this attitude has a lot to do with the fact that Cyrus has sold more than 15 million records, earned \$86 million at the box office and starred in a top-rated TV show. In fact, she's been calling some of the shots in her career for a while now. (Nicholas Sparks offered to write Billy Ray Cyrus into *The Last Song*, but as [Sparks recently told Good Morning America](#), she nixed the idea.)

Still, unlike so many child stars, Cyrus somehow escaped the showbiz trap of manufactured personality and preserved a genuineness that is very hard to fake.

"She's seems very well grounded," says James Bates of the strategic communications firm Sitrick and Company, which has advised an entire universe of luminaries on the art of the media spin. "And that's probably a tribute to her and her family. She doesn't seem to be out doing the things that get young performers into trouble. She seems to know what she wants."

Her father's career arc has served as cautionary tale. "My mom is always telling me it takes a long time to get to the top," a 14-year-old Cyrus was [fond of telling reporters](#), "but a short time to get to the bottom." And living with her large Southern Baptist family in Los Angeles' Toluca Lake, befriending the kids who work at Smoothie King, sometimes even sharing a room with her little sister, built its own brand of character, too.

That down-to-earth side of Cyrus turned up on *American Idol* last week, when as a "guest mentor," she was [cheering for the quirkiest contestant](#), the demure glassblowing apprentice Siobhan Magnus with the Tina Turner pipes. There they were, the pop princess in cutoffs and hair extensions and Magnus in her Larry King-style glasses, a delicate pink cardigan and acid-washed jeans. But it was Cyrus who was gushing. "I'm *really* excited to hear your song," Cyrus told her. "Your voice has such a swagger to it... I like that you're so different and you're so who you are. And your voice says that."

Sounds familiar.

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*Gina Piccalo spent a decade at the Los Angeles Times covering Hollywood. She's now a contributing writer for Los Angeles Magazine and her work has appeared in Elle, More and Emmy. She can be found at [ginapiccalo.com](#).*

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March 31, 2010 | 10:40pm

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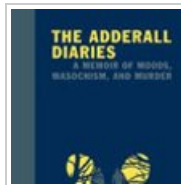
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sort by date:

***sangha774***

She needs elocution lessons. When talking she sounds like Donald Duck.

8:43 am, Apr 1, 2010

***zelly28***

I've never doubted that her half naked Vanity Fair pix were her 'coming-out', her transition. Her pole dance was beyond pathetic, and I'm thrilled that at age 11, my granddaughter has totally lost interest in Hannah/Miley. Her dad, the one-hit-wonder, should be totally spanked. He's a letch!

8:53 am, Apr 1, 2010

***DicedPeas***

She's going to be the next Lindsay Lohan or Britney Spears in about 2 years.

9:10 am, Apr 1, 2010

***OldJoe***

Watching her with granddaughters, I preferred H. Duff.

10:11 am, Apr 1, 2010

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