

THE SLATEST

How Beyoncé's Publicist Succeeded by Failing

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One of the seven images Beyoncé's publicist was hoping her fans wouldn't see

Photo by Ezra Shaw/Getty Images

One of Beyoncé's publicists made a questionable PR decision yesterday afternoon when she reached out to BuzzFeed to request the site replace a handful of "unflattering" photos that it had published in an incredibly BuzzFeed-y post titled, "The 33 Fiercest Moments From Beyoncé's Halftime Show." "I am certain that you will be able to find some better photos," the publicist wrote, before naming the seven specific shots she'd most like to see disappear.

Anyone familiar with how the Internet works can probably guess what followed: A little more than two hours later the website went live with its hard-hitting follow-up, "The 'Unflattering' Photos Beyoncé's Publicist Doesn't Want You To See." Gawker followed with its own post soon after, complete with those very same "unflattering" photos, and large swaths of the rest of the Web did the same.

The most obvious lesson from the whole thing is that if there's ever a picture up on the Internet that you don't want people to see, it's probably not the best strategy to go ahead and flag said photo for a blogger who makes her bones by creating viral listicles. (That would appear to be PR 101 in the online age.)

The second is that the normal rules don't apply to Beyoncé. She can force her former bandmates to sing her solo hit about how great it is to be solo and still receive rave reviews. She can admit to singing along to a prerecorded version of "The Star-Spangled Banner," and similar praise follows. For whatever reason (probably the sheer combination of her musical talent and beauty), she's currently enjoying a goodwill streak that makes her nearly untouchable. So it should come as little surprise that yesterday's mistake by a celebrity flack turned into a PR boost for the already insanely popular singer.

"In what world are these shots unflattering?" BuzzFeed's original post asked incredulously in the subhead, taking aim at the publicist and not the pop star, and setting the tone for the coverage that followed. Jezebel's Lindy West would later speak for the Web at large: "I don't know about you guys, but the photos don't look 'unflattering' to me—they look like an epic badass doing the fuck out of her job."

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