Life

What is 'The Khia Asylum' and how do artist's escape?

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Chances are if you are involved with queer internet culture to any extent you have heard of terms such as "oomf", "reheating nachos" and "onika burgers." All these terms have come mostly from X, formerly known as Twitter, and are constantly evolving as new pop culture moments arise.



Rita Ora posing for a red carpet event at Red Sea International Film Festival. Rita Ora has had a diverse career, releasing music and acting in films like "Descendants."
PHOTO COURTESY OF @RITAORA ON INSTAGRAM.

Chronically online queer people create more terminology every day that can be hard to keep up with. Of these is a fictional location known as "The Khia Asylum", named after the rapper behind the song "My Neck, My Back (Lick It)." The term has gained traction as multiple musicians have referenced it in recent interviews and album rollouts, such as Charli xcx, Zara Larsson and Bebe Rexha.

But what exactly is The Khia Asylum and why is Bebe Rexha posting TikToks about how she is so desperate to escape it?

The commonly agreed on definition of The Khia Asylum is a fictional prison in which irrelevant music artists have been sentenced to live out their days. The term was initially coined in a May 2024 in a post on X by user @impxrfectforyou with a tier list of female pop stars ranked in terms of relevance. The bottom tier was listed as The Khia Asylum with Zara Larsson, Ava Max, Charli xcx, Bebe Rexha and Kim Petras listed as the inmates.

Demi Lovato and Camila Cabello were both listed as buying their tickets into The Khia Asylum with Sabrina Carpenter depicted as just escaping with the success of her song "Espresso."

Since then, the term has grown in popularity and has been co-opted into an adjective to describe any irrelevant or unsuccessful artist as a Khia.

There are some artists with little room to debate if they belong under the title, an example being Rita Ora.

Ora has a seemingly diverse career between music, acting roles in films such as the "Descendants" and the "Fifty Shades" franchise and reality TV judge appearances. Despite all of this she does not hold a strong presence in pop culture or has any hit songs.

A more infamous "Khia Moment" of Ora's career is a 2014 Tweet stating "Dropping my new song Monday if this gets 100,000 retweets". The post gained very little traction and the following Monday Ora posted "By the way my Twitter got hacked someone is threatening to release new music I've worked really hard on. Nothing comes out until I'm ready".

Most of the posts around the Khia Asylum tend to be from women and queer men who mostly listen to female artists leading to the inmates also being a majority female artists which questions if male artists are also allowed to be a Khia. Other factors such as musicians with major fall offs in the case of Katy Perry, having popular songs but little chart success in the case of Lorde or controversies in the case of Nicki Minaj and her recent associations with the Trump Administration also lead to grey areas on what it truly means to be a Khia.

There's also a category of newer artists such as Gracie Abrams and Sombr who have achieved commercial success and Grammy nominations for their work but equally amassed very divisive opinions that make their role as a Khia disputed. Coming from a social media term with no true definition, it can truly be up to individuals to decide who they classify as Khia or not.

Some artists have escaped the imagined prison, though. Two of the members listed in the original Tweet: Charli xcx and Zara Larsson have recently been considered by many to escape with the release of "brat" in 2024 for Charli and "Midnight Sun" in 2025 for Larsson.

Playing a major role in the success of both albums was the branding that came with them. The marketing of "brat" revolved around the lime green background with Arial Narrow writing used by many companies, including the presidential campaign for Kamala Harris, and ended with summer 2024 being dubbed by many as "brat summer".

"Midnight Sun" took advantage of the popular dolphin meme used with Larsson's 2018 hit "Symphony" in 2024 with the album's aesthetic being based around the same neon colored summer used with the meme. An alternate cover of the album was made featuring the work of Lisa Frank, known for her vibrant imagery, reminiscent of the meme. The Recording Academy even deemed "brat" the 2024 winner of the Best Recording Package award.

There is some debate over whether The Khia Asylum is a genius term to tier pop artists, a degrading term to put down mostly female artists trying their best or just a regurgitation of already existing terms, such as one-hit wonder. Despite your personal opinion, The Khia Asylum is not going anywhere. Now, social media users just need to wait until June 12 to see if Bebe Rexha's new album "Dirty Blonde: The Visual Album" is the escape she has been teasing.

On 'Cloud 9' with Megan Moroney

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If you haven't frequented country music spaces recently, you might not know the name Megan Moroney, but the Georgia native and singer-songwriter has been on the rise since 2022 with the release of her hit "Tennessee Orange."

"Cloud 9", Moroney's third album, stays true to the singer's country roots while also playing into the popularity of pop-country. With 15 tracks and two collaborations, the album did not disappoint.

The title track "Cloud 9" is a perfect opener and a rare love song. It sets up the sound of the album, and the dreamy guitar sounds match the lyrics perfectly.

"Medicine" is a catchy play on the phrase: "get a taste of your own medicine." The song feels like a quintessential country song with the production reminiscent of old Miranda Lambert.

"6 Months Later" was the first single dropped for her new era, and it would absolutely hit on pop radio. It's the perfect car song because of how fun it is to sing. The concept of the song is very relatable: having someone trying to crawl back into your life when they see you doing well, even when they're the one who left.

The album, for me, divides into songs I either liked or loved, such as "Stupid" and "Beautiful Things."

While "Stupid" is fun as a song about being in denial over being ghosted, it doesn't resonate with me as much as others. "Beautiful Things" stands out for its touching lyrics. Moroney wrote it for her baby niece, reflecting on the hardships girls face as they grow up. As an older fan, I can appreciate its message while recognizing it wasn't written for me.

"Convincing" is for the girls who meet someone once and fall in love with them immediately, and I appreciate finally getting the recognition we deserve. It's slowed down a lot from where the album started; it relies on a guitar to do the heavy lifting with the production and allows for Moroney's vocals to shine.

As you reach the back half of the album, the tone starts to shift from fun "screw you" songs to sadder ballad types.

Track 7, "Liars & Tigers & Bears," is perfection. When I heard the opening piano, I knew this was about to be special. The song is about Moroney's experience in the music industry so far, but also just experiences that many women can relate to. One of my favorite lyrics is from the chorus when she sings, "So, work 'til it kills you / but don't actually die". This song is a masterclass of Moroney's writing abilities.

When the track list for the album was released, my eyes went immediately to "I Only Miss You" as it featured Ed Sheeran, and I'm a proud Sheerio. The song is raw, and their voices sound stunning together. It's kind of an odd pairing because of the genre difference, but it works so well. The song is reminiscent of a classic country ballad and is easily a top pick for me off the album.

"Wedding Dress" is another emotional killer. It was written years ago and never found itself a home on Moroney's projects until now. It's about the fear that you'll never get over someone, and when you're walking down the aisle, they're still on your mind. There are already multiple "The Summer I Turned Pretty" edits to this song, so it's safe to say it's a fan favorite.

"Change of Heart" is another slight miss for me. It's the kind of song that's meant for being performed live because of its rock-esque production and scream-singing in the outro . As it compares to the rest of the album, it falls flat.

Moroney, like so many, is a huge Kacey Musgraves fan, so getting her to sing on "Bells and Whistles" is a career highlight. Similar to her collab with Sheeran, she sounds amazing with Musgraves. It's a fun song poking fun at exes who thought you were too much, but instead of being ashamed, embracing it.

"Table for Two" and "Wish I Didn't" blend in among the album's larger tracks. "Table for Two" is acoustic-driven as Moroney ponders missing someone and whether to reach out, while "Wish I Didn't" shifts to upbeat, pop-leaning production as Moroney playfully warns her new partner that missteps could end up in a song.

"Who Hurt You?" is Moroney's version of Taylor Swift's "The Smallest Man Who Ever Lived". She said everything she needed to say, and in doing so, she read the man (Riley Green) to absolute filth. She calls him gross on the bridge, and I'm utterly obsessed with it.

Closing the album is another beautiful ballad in "Waiting On the Rain". Instead of Morney's classic breakup songs, where she wants the man back, this shows growth in knowing that while the relationship is over, she knows now that things will get better and life will move on. It's a song that really lends itself to Moroney's vocals, where you can feel the emotions.



Megan Moroney holding up a vinyl for her album "Cloud 9" with two bonus tracks. The vinyl is available at Target.
PHOTO COURTESY OF @MEGMORONEY ON INSTAGRAM.

RATING: 4/5

As a newer fan of Moroney's, I didn't go into this album with any expectations but came out with even more love for her and her artistry. The album spotlights her writing skills and voice that have continued to grow over her time as an artist.