Opinion

Oh, oh! That's Gen Z humor

By ANTHONY ANGELILLO
Copy Editor

Millions of people across TikTok, Instagram Reels and every other short-form platform have watched the same memes, heard the same sounds and laughed at the same nonsensical garbage that would have gotten zero views five years ago.

This is no longer just a stupid internet trend; short-form platforms have fundamentally changed how an entire generation processes humor.

In other words, we have literally burned down everything comedy used to be, pissed on the ashes and rebuilt it into something so unhinged that trying to explain a joke to someone who is not chronically online feels like describing your Xbox party chats to a priest.

So let's get right into it, with the mythical creature that is conservative podcaster Charlie Kirk. I cannot explain to another living person why I have spent hours scrolling through "Kirkified" memes and laughing like something is clinically wrong with me.

Mind you, this is a man who was assassinated back in Sept. 2025, and somehow, he will never be forgotten, not because of what he believed in, but with "We Are Charlie Kirk" becoming the biggest meme of the fall season.

If you've been living under a rock, it's a "memorial" AI song that people called the worst thing ever recorded while simultaneously streaming it, so much so that it topped Spotify's Viral chart and landed on the Billboard Hot Christian Songs list.

That's not all. People started face-swapping Charlie Kirk's likeness onto every meme and reaction image on the internet, and the word "kirkify" became an actual verb that real people used in real conversations.

His face has been on IShowSpeed, Marvel actor Anthony Mackie and, for fuck's sake, a realistic Bart Simpson trying not to laugh.

Millions of us are in our bedrooms at an unreasonable hour, watching the Kirk cinematic universe unfold, and that is when I realized my sense of humor was beyond professional help.

So, how does something like this happen? The answer lies in how these platforms reward speed over substance. A joke does not need setup, context or even a punchline to go viral.

When Oxford made "brain rot" its Word of the Year in 2024, the internet saw that and said, "Bet, let us produce even more stupid shit."

Take, for instance, the "6-7" meme. It has no reason to exist, yet it was on every For You page for weeks because we find saying two numbers funny.

Now, whenever someone says it, I always smirk and look for others who, sure enough, are looking right back. Man, our future is so bright.

Then we have The Hawk Tuah girl, who went from a Nashville street interview about "sucking it" to launching a podcast, signing brand deals, throwing a first pitch at a New York Mets game and then crashing a crypto coin so hard the FBI reportedly got involved, all in a single calendar year.



ILLUSTRATION BY LILIANA MIRABELLA

None of this should be real, but it is, and I guarantee people completely forgot about this and are now remembering that period as a fever dream. That's why traditional comedy feels like it's losing ground. I love comedy, and I love remembering something so memorable that you can never forget.

I can never get that now, and I hate that. Stand-up specials, late-night monologues and sitcom writing all operate with an audience willing to sit still for longer than 10 seconds. TikTok blew that shit up, and now millions, including myself, struggle even to watch a one-minute video.

That dynamic is how "Skibidi Toilet" became a legitimate cultural phenomenon rather than dying in a week, as it probably should have.

A YouTube series about human-headed toilets fighting camera-headed soldiers, made in a video game, has racked up over 16 billion views and 41 million subscribers.

Michael Bay, who has become a meme himself with "Directed by Michael Bay" appearing after someone cuts away right before something bad happens, is producing a movie adaptation.

Fortnite sold "Skibidi Toilet" cosmetics. Scholastic, the company that gave us everyone's favorite school book fair, is publishing Skibidi Toilet chapter books. The word "skibidi" became so unavoidable that Pope Francis used the term "brain rot" in a 2025 address urging people to get off social media. The fucking Pope (excuse my language) had to address this.

The algorithm is the real villain here, and I say that as someone who is completely attached to what it feeds me.

TikTok has now fully rewired my brain to what we find funny by providing increasingly absurd content until a random sound layered over an unrelated image becomes the peak of comedy.

My sense of humor is beyond saving, and I have made peace with that. But this is not just my problem. An entire generation got its comedic taste buds permanently altered by an algorithm that prioritized chaos over genuine craft.

There is no more context to anything we watch now. We just doom scroll until we are half asleep on our beds, because we have nothing better to do.

If none of this makes sense to you or you have no clue what I am talking about, first, I am proud of you and second, if you want your internet virginity taken away, give it one week on TikTok, you will never recover.

Taylor Frankie Paul's 'Bachelorette' season was never going to be aired

By ADRIANA CERBONE AND WILLOW SEIBOLD

Taylor Frankie Paul is known as the leader of "Secret Lives of Mormon Wives" and creator of MomTok. Paul was supposed to star in season 22 of "The Bachelorette" but her season was not aired. Was this planned all along?

ABC cancelled the upcoming bachelorette season this month after a video from 2023 resurfaced of Paul allegedly committing domestic violence. She attacked her now ex-boyfriend, Dakota Mortensen.

The video displayed Paul supposedly hitting Mortensen, kicking him and throwing chairs at him.

In season one of "Secret Lives of Mormon Wives," the audience was made aware that Paul was drunk during this incident and was charged with assault, criminal mischief and domestic violence

From this cancellation, ABC will reportedly lose approximately $50 million due to the abrupt pull of the show right before its scheduled airing.

There is no way ABC was not made aware of the charges in the past made against Paul, especially before having her star in their show.

Some things aren't adding up.

In 2010, approximately 11.7 million people watched season six of "The Bachelorette." Flash forward 15 years, in 2025, approximately 1.6 million people watch the show.

"The Bachelorette" is not at its peak anymore. The video of Paul was from three years ago and was already known from season one of "Secret Lives of Mormon Wives."

In 15 years, "The Bachelorette" lost 9.8 million viewers, so ABC knew it needed to do something to make the show what it once was.

And Paul's drama could do just that.

This makes us think the season was never meant to air. That this was all planned to help "The Bachelorette" gain back the views it had lost and make the show popular again.

Why would ABC risk having such a hotheaded individual on its show that can create such backlash on their series?

It makes no sense.

Why film the whole season just to cancel it because of an incident that happened three years ago that was already known?

There are so many questions.

We have never cared to watch any season of "The Bachelorette," but knowing Paul was going to be the star made us want to tune in. Although, if you think about it, she isn't the best candidate given that she was divorced, has two baby daddies and clearly has some anger issues. Being aware of all of her emotional toils and repeated breakdowns all throughout "Secret Lives of Mormon Wives," there is no doubt this would be an interesting season, no matter the end result.

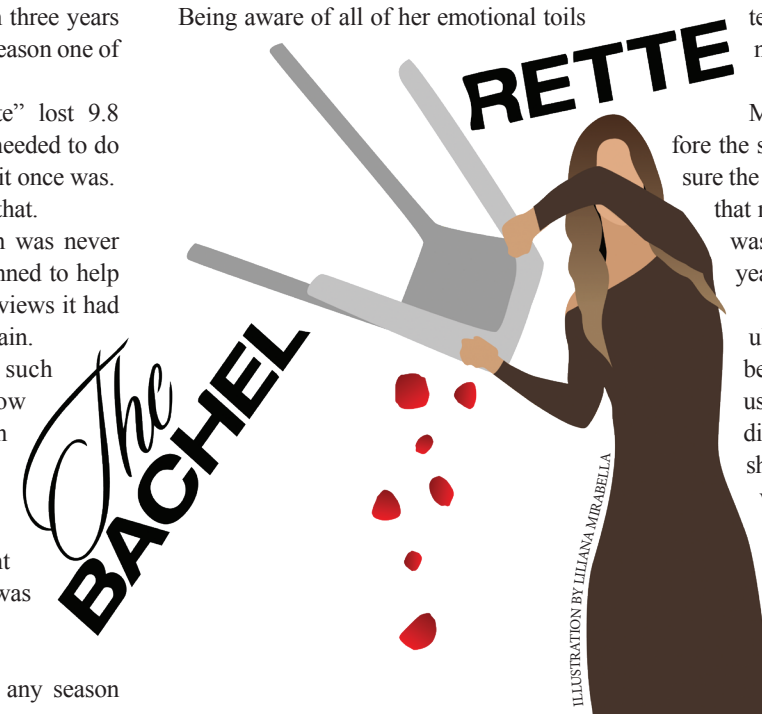

ILLUSTRATION BY LILIANA MIRABELLA

ABC knew that she brought drama and attention everywhere she went, and the network used it to their advantage.

We think it's even possible Mortensen leaked this video right before the season was meant to be aired to ensure the season did not go public, something that many speculate online. I mean, why was this video just now leaked three years later? Very suspicious.

His constant need to use his manipulative tactics and possibly abusive behavior behind closed doors makes us believe he would do anything to disrupt her career and future relationships. No sane father would leak a video of his ex throwing a chair and hitting their child, unless he has alternative motives.

My finger is pointed at Mortensen or ABC because, in any case, any publicity is good publicity.