

# WEEKEND

# WHERE HAVE ALL THE ROCK STARS GONE?

// BY CIELO GAZARD

Britpop legends Oasis are currently on their highly-anticipated reunion tour. I spent my summer in Britain and saw first-hand how much Oasis-mania took over the country. Every time I took the train into London, I saw people wearing bucket hats and Adidas T-shirts branded with the band's logo. On Aug. 31, I saw Oasis perform to a sold-out crowd at MetLife Stadium. They played all their hits and a bunch of their non-album B-sides as well. Before my eyes, Oasis cemented themselves as legends of rock n' roll. They are resting on their laurels and have embraced becoming elder statesmen of rock. Is this what it means to be a rockstar in 2025?

Oasis were tabloid darlings during the 1990s. A single consisting of the brothers getting into a verbal altercation for 14 minutes during an interview reached number 52 on the UK Singles Chart in 1995. We, the general public, uphold and commend bad behavior from our favorite celebrities. We read gossip magazines, tell our friends about who in show business is feuding with who and eat up the latest drama on our Instagram feeds. We, as a result, created the rockstar. Performing for tens of thousands of adoring fans night after night, a woman you've christened as your muse at your side, enough drugs and yes-men to fuel your inflated ego — who wouldn't want that?

But what's considered rockstar behavior in your 20s is self-destructive and irresponsible in your 40s and 50s. In the days leading up to the first gig of Oasis' reunion tour, some joked that Liam and Noel would get into a fight onstage and end up cancelling the tour. To some, this was a major fear, especially knowing how much they had spent on tickets. Others held a secret desire to be able to say, "I was there when Liam threw his tambourine at Noel!"

Strikingly, the brothers — now in their 50s — are very sober this tour. Before the encore, Liam joked, "I have to go to bed because I'm a little princess these days."

Perhaps there is an expiration date on a rock band, at least in terms of relevance. Will the same fans who saw them perform in their prime still listen to new material, or will they want to only hear the hits? It's up to these veteran acts to decide if they want to fully lean into nostalgia or if they want to challenge their fans. In 2019, I saw The Who at Madison Square Garden. The set consisted of songs written nearly 50 years earlier, with the exception of two new songs featured on an upcoming LP. The crowd wasn't into those new songs and would've rather heard "Pinball Wizard" or "Won't Get Fooled Again."

Oasis are doing a greatest hits tour. No curveballs, no changes in the setlist, no politics. Remember when mainstream musical artists were political? Some of the biggest albums released 50 years ago — Marvin Gaye's "What's

Going On," Pink Floyd's "The Dark Side of the Moon" — are deeply political works. The politics of these albums, from their historical contexts to the personal struggles of the artists who made them, cannot be separated from the music itself. However, we refuse to think critically about music. It's all just background noise. "Shut up and play the hits!" we say. "I loved this band before they got political!" others proclaim. And we wonder why big names stay silent on conflicts and issues happening right now.

Where are the new rockstars? American rock band Cage the Elephant opened for Oasis at MetLife. I never listened to the band's music before this concert, but they were electric. They looked like rockstars, but they'd been around for a number of years. Who does the average teenager who wants to play rock n' roll have to look up to that isn't over 50, 60, 70 or even 80 years old?

There are plenty of amazing current rock musicians out there. The prolific King Gizzard and the Lizard Wizard recently swung by New Haven. The Windmill scene in the UK has produced some of the best bands of the decade. Do I see King Gizzard or Black Country, New Road selling out MetLife Stadium in the next few years? It depends on if these bands want to go in that direction. It may mean having to sacrifice experimentation for the sake of pleasing a crowd of thousands. Some people are there to have a good time and hear the one song they know. They don't want to be challenged.

The rise of streaming has allowed for listeners to easily find new music. It has allowed me to discover artists from decades ago that I would have never heard any other way. However, streaming can keep you isolated on your little musical island. You don't have to listen to the new Sabrina Carpenter album if you don't want to. You can listen to the Beatles all day and never be inundated with anything related to Taylor Swift. However, you can't say that rock is dead if you're not actively seeking out music that is being made right now. We as rock fans have no right to complain about the lack of rock in the Top 40 if we aren't supporting newer bands. Many great new artists don't care about mainstream success. Some musicians don't want to be rockstars. Live with it!

Do we need rockstars? Hedonistic self-important egomaniacs continue to exist across all genres of music. But, as rock has evolved and changed throughout the decades, can the image of the rockstar change as well? A young budding music fan in 2025 may consider a bookish teetotaling songwriter their definition of a rockstar. But, dinosaurs still walk among us. The rockstars of yesteryear, those who didn't burn out in a haze of substances, are still out there clinging onto the memories of the past. Reunion tours are as rock n' roll as trashing a hotel room, and Oasis returning as a nostalgia act is part of the natural life cycle of most 20th century British rock acts. Oasis may be the last act that fully embraced the excesses of the rockstar life. The brothers have grown and changed since the '90s. It's time our image of the rockstar changes, too.

Contact **CIELO GAZARD** at [cielo.gazard@yale.edu](mailto:cielo.gazard@yale.edu).