





Harry Styles

– a man for our time?

Androgyn, politisch engagiert und erfolgreicher denn je: Der ehemalige Teenieschwarm hat sich neu erfunden, definiert die heutige Popkultur um – und verkörpert den Zeitgeist wie kaum ein anderer Künstler.

Von LORRAINE MALLINDER

ADVANCED

Not that long ago, Harry Styles was singing in the boy band One Direction (1D), melting little girls' hearts with his goofy smile and floppy hairstyles. But at some point over the past few years, he suddenly became a hot global icon, busting the Billboard Hot 100 with hits, playing sell-out concerts at Madison Square Garden and making his mark in film and fashion.

Far from turning diva, Harry seems just as adorable today as he was on *The X Factor* – the TV talent show that set him on the path to fame with 1D. From that slightly nervous schoolboy in 2010, when he described his home village of Holmes Chapel, in Cheshire, as “quite boring”, to his present-day incarnation as one of the world's biggest superstars, the 29-year-old doesn't seem to have lost his cheeky charm.

Changed but still the same

Styles's rise has been stratospheric, but he's kept his feet on the ground. In a recent interview with *Rolling Stone*, he spoke of his fans' off-the-scale reaction after his hit “As It Was” was played at Madison Square Garden. Afterwards, he felt the need to sit alone in his dressing room to process the experience, one that would easily knock the best of us off balance. Styles has set habits on tour:

Name: Harry Edward Styles
Born: 1 February 1994
Famous as: Singer, songwriter, actor, fashion icon

adorable [ə'dɔːrəbəl]
 • bezaubernd

Billboard Hot 100
 • Hitparade des US-amerikanischen Magazins *Billboard*

bust sth. *ifml.*
 • etw. sprengen

cheeky
 • frech, keck

floppy
 • hier: wuschelig

goofy *ifml.*
 • albern, unbeholfen

off the scale *ifml.*
 • überwältigend

turn sth.
 • etw. werden, sich zu etw. wandeln

he enjoys time by himself after gigs and makes sure he takes his vitamins before getting a good night's sleep.

In many ways, he's still the same person he has always been. Perhaps a little more careful when it comes to his private life, but remarkably relaxed about the intense interest that his level of fame brings. His romances with A-listers like Taylor Swift, Kendall Jenner and Olivia Wilde have made headlines, but there aren't many details. At the time of writing, a video of him smooching with model Emily Ratajkowski, aka @emrata, had gone viral, breaking the hearts of a zillion "Harries", as his girl fans are known.

Would anyone have imagined Styles's success in the X Factor days? Maybe not. Judge Simon Cowell called his version of Stevie Wonder's "Isn't She Lovely" "rubbish", but his likeability was never in doubt. The audience cheered wildly when he was voted through to the next round by Cowell and Nicole Scherzinger of The Pussycat Dolls. Scherzinger helped Cowell to set up One Direction, grouping Styles with four other singers. She said: "The little girls are going to love them!"

The little girls, and the big girls, did indeed love the instantly famous band. They had a string of hits over five years, from "What Makes You Beautiful" in 2011 to "Drag Me Down" in 2015.

Life after 1D

Burned out, the band declared it was taking time out in 2015. Of all the members, Styles, who had always stood out with his Mick Jagger swagger, seemed the most likely to make it as a solo artist – though he might just as easily have ended up on the B-list, now and again making headlines in gossip columns.

Anyone who'd written Styles off as a has-been heart-throb would soon be eating their words. His career has now reached such heights that 1D almost appears like a footnote to his career.

In 2017, he released the album *Harry Styles*, showing us his inner rock star with the song "Sign of the Times". The video featured a moodier Harry singing out the ballad on the lonely Isle of Skye. A massive hit on both sides of the Atlantic, the song killed off his teen idol image.



One Direction: *This Is Us*, the feature film from 2013



Styles's romances with the big girls have made headlines

adopt sth.

- etw. übernehmen, wählen

aka (also known as)

- [,ei ker 'ei] ifml.
- alias

A-lister ifml.

- A-Promi

androgynous

- [æn'drɒdʒənəs]
- androgyn

clad

- bekleidet

gender-fluid

- ['dʒendə ,flu:ɪd]
- zwischen den Geschlechtern wechselnd

gig ifml.

- Auftritt

gossip

- Klatsch

heart-throb ifml.

- Teenieschwarm

jumpsuit

- Overall

lace

- Spitze

moody

- melancholisch

queerbaiting

- sich aus Imagegründen als homosexuell oder queer ausgeben

raspy vocals ['vəʊkəlz]

- Reibeisenstimme

rubbish UK

- Mist

ruffled

- gerüsch

smooch ifml.

- knutschen

swagger

- stolzieren

whimsical ['wɪmzɪkəl]

- skurril, wunderbar

words: eat one's ~

- alles zurücknehmen

zillion ifml.

- Abermillionen

This success was confirmed in 2019 with the release of the album *Fine Line*, which saw him entering more whimsical territory with hits like "Watermelon Sugar". The video for the song showed Styles surrounded by bikini-clad beauties biting into juicy slices of watermelon – a metaphor for female sexual pleasure. The song brought out the soulful qualities of the performer, his raspy vocals adding bite to the summery instrumentals. It was clear the singer was growing up.

All grown up

By this point, Styles had become friends with the legendary Stevie Nicks of Fleetwood Mac. He'd met her on a night out and invited her round to his place to listen to the newly recorded *Fine Line*. Later, the pair sang 1970s hits such as "Landslide" together onstage. The friendship with Nicks marked a new phase in Styles's career. His association with a powerful female figure was not surprising in view of his relationship with his mother – his biggest supporter since the days of *The X Factor*. Styles is a fan of strong women.

A man for our times, Styles isn't afraid to show his feminine side. In recent years, he's adopted an androgynous style, with gender-fluid fashion choices including glittering jumpsuits, feather boas and heels. In 2020, he became *Vogue*'s first solo male cover star, wearing a dress designed by Gucci. In the accompanying interview, Styles said he thought women's clothes were "amazing", questioning why he should be limited by "clothes for men and clothes for women".

Styles's fashion choices have led to questions about his sexuality. Outfits like the ruffled top with lace sleeves and single pearl earring that he wore to the 2019 Met Gala have caused some to accuse him of queerbaiting – playing with LGBTQ themes without committing to a specific identity. But in a 2019 interview with *The Guardian*, he insisted that sexuality wasn't the point. "It's: who cares? Does that make sense? It's just: who cares?" he said. "I want things to look a certain way. Not because it makes me look gay, or it makes me look straight, or it makes me look bisexual, but because I think it looks cool."



"How can you say young girls don't get it?
They're our future" – Harry Styles

Whatever Styles is wearing, he shows up as himself, making it okay for people to be themselves whatever their age, gender or orientation. His fashion statement, if there is one, seems to be about tolerance, dovetailing with his support for HeForShe, Black Lives Matter and many other causes. Last year, on tour in Chicago, he drew attention to protesters in Iran who took to the streets after the death of a Kurdish woman in custody called Mahsa Amini, who'd been arrested by the morality police for wearing her headscarf in a way that showed hair. "Stand with the women of Iran," he said, on a yellow sign.

Last year, Styles hit a career high with the release of *Harry's House*, his third solo album and biggest commercial success. The hit single "As it Was" topped the Billboard Hot 100 for 15 consecutive weeks – the longest any solo artist has held that position.

Picking up Album of the Year at the Grammys, he hit a wrong note, saying, "This doesn't happen to people like me very often." Critics slammed him, pointing out that white males actually pick up more awards than, say, black women. But the furore over the comment, made in the full glare of the world's media, quickly disappeared.

New directions

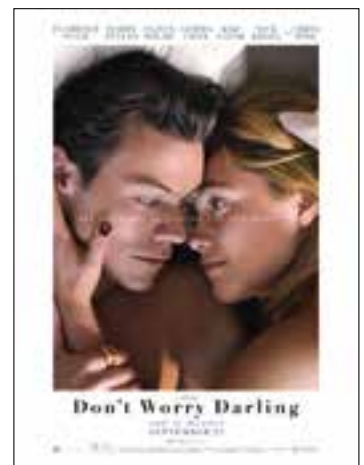
As if he hadn't already packed enough into his young life, Styles is now making a name for himself as an actor. His first role in a film was back in 2017, when he played a small role as a soldier in the Oscar-winning *Dunkirk*. Director Christopher Nolan was unaware of his celebrity at the time, saying Styles had been chosen for his "old-fashioned face".

More recently, he played a lead role in *Don't Worry, Darling*, a dystopian thriller directed by his ex, Olivia Wilde – though Wilde's split from her partner during filming may have created more waves than Styles's performance as a workaholic husband. He did better in *The Policeman*, playing a closeted cop in a love triangle. It's probably fair to say he needs to work on his acting. Not yet 30, he has plenty of time.

Now, 13 years into his career, Styles seems perfectly at home with superstardom. And it's perhaps this authenticity, the currency of social media, that makes him so popular with his many fans. In any case, he seems to be having the time of his life. One thing's for sure: the world can't take its eyes off Harry Styles. Whatever he does next is bound to be interesting.



Wearing a Gucci jacket and dress, 2020



The Guardian described Styles's performance as "entirely untroubled by a hint of an interior life".

closeted ['klɒzɪtɪd]

- verkappt; hier: seine Homosexualität verbergend

consecutive

- [kən'sekjʊtɪv]
- aufeinanderfolgend

custody

- Haft

director [daɪ'rektə]

- Regisseur(in)

dovetail with sth.

- ['dʌvteɪl]
- zu etw. passen

headscarf

- Kopftuch

love triangle ['ləʊvtriəŋɡl]

- Dreiecksbeziehung

morality police

- Sittenpolizei

note: hit a wrong ~

- den falschen Ton treffen

slam sb. ifml.

- jmdn. miesmachen, zerreißen