

## ***What: The New Way to be Popular***

- Alicia Katz

As a fan of comedy, I have logged many hours watching stand-up and television programs written by people like George Carlin and Louis C.K., and even some rising stars like Anthony Jeselnik and Aziz Ansari. In my addiction to laugh, I stumbled upon Bo Burnham. He is a young, rather awkward comedian who has proven time and time again his place in the community. I am attending his show *Happy* next week, and in order to prepare I watched his last show, *What*, for, I'm sure, the hundredth time.

Bo Burnham grew up in Hamilton, Massachusetts and attended St. John's Preparatory School. His popularity began to ascend due to a large following on YouTube. Currently he has over 900,000 subscribers. In 2010 he released his first comedy special *Words Words Words*, which aired on Comedy Central. *Zach Stone is Going to Be Famous* was created by Bo Burnham in 2013 but was canceled after one season due to the audience not understanding the satire, as well as lack of promotion. He continued to pursue comedy despite this failure. *What* was released in 2013, along with his poetry book, "Egghead."

*What* is a special kind of comedy that is rarely done by adult comedians. He writes music and incorporates his songs into his shows. He also talks about very controversial subjects and creates arguments in his show. He is not afraid to be audacious. He is very concise about his opinions on religion, comedy and even himself. He is honest about the world as he perceives it. Much of comedy is like this; Bo's approach, however, makes him unique. Although he is not appropriate for all, his show is not vulgar or gratuitous. If he uses a mature idea, it is to emphasize his opinion and not to solely produce a laugh. It is refreshing to listen to him sing about ideas and concepts that are not addressed in pop culture. Bo's ability to observe and evaluate what he sees is only improved upon by his translation of those ideas into song and comedy.

Bo Burnham is a new type of comedian. He rose from YouTube and was able to use his internet fame to get an MTV show and pursue his passion. So much of what was known about media is changing with the new ability for anyone to follow their passions simply by owning a computer. This is becoming a world controlled by popular opinion, not what is produced in studios and shoved down the throat of the consumer. Creators and visionaries are the true artists of today.

If you find yourself bored with the overproduced puppets that cloud true talent and passion, I encourage you to watch *What* and explore people like Bo Burnham people who do what they love because they are far more entertaining than those who work for a paycheck.