

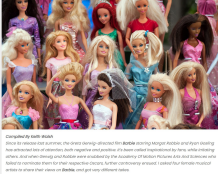


Popular Culture Beat

News, Reviews, and Interviews

Four Feminist Music Artists Speak Out About 'Barbie' (Film Reviews)

By Keith
On Feb 11, 2024 in Film, Hollywood



Complexity Keith writes:
Since its release last summer, the once derided director Greta Gerwig's film Barbie starring Margot Robbie and Ryan Reynolds has attracted lots of attention. Both negative and positive. It's been called inspirational by fans, while insisting others that when Barbie and Ken were created by the Academy Of Motion Picture Arts And Sciences who failed to nominate them for their respective Oscars, further controversy ensued. I asked four female musical artists to share their views on Barbie, and got very different takes.

Sienná

First, there's **Sienná**, a Japanese expatriate living in Norway, where she creates fascinating experimental world beat electronic.



Instagram: Sienná (@sienna) World Beat, Electro And Experimental

Sienná writes: "The Barbie movie itself was apparently a creative commercial product out to generate profit for itself. The movie title reminded me of something pink, artificial and plastic. Gerwig's choice to call my expectations beforehand, it turned out to be smarter and more well-thought than I first imagined. Experiencing what we are striving for every day from the point of view of a personified Barbie – one of the most familiar toy products of all time – really was easy to relate to."

"What I liked best about the movie was that the most stereotypical gender roles like Barbie and Ken themselves go through all the troubles that they've been contributing to create in regard to gender norms and societal expectations. It has a plenty of self-deprecating and humorous moments that highlight some universal questions that resonate loudly with most of us, both men/women and young/old, dealing with the lifelong feeling of not being good enough, or standing in between our needs, desires and expectations versus what I didn't perceive the reasoning behind the movie was feminism. It was all about 'mutual respect' towards differences."

Sienná (@sienna) on Instagram
Sienná (@sienna) on YouTube
Sienná (@sienna) on Spotify

Margot Day Of Metamorph

Here's the New York based goth-rocker, **Margot Day**, who started out fronting The Plugz in the heart of New York City and now incorporates goths with her electro goth project Metamorph.



Instagram: Margot Day (@margotday) Gothic, Electronics And Intense Vibes

Day writes: "This pink is out, hot pink and black are in – it's a goth pop revolution! Meanwhile, the latest Barbie movie also controversy its ending featuring Barbie in an AI world with Ken sent away to "the nearest" police station. It's a stark reminder of our society's drift towards independence over romantic commitment. This movie raises a crucial question in chasing independence, are we forgetting the value of love, connection and happily ever afters? Little Barbie wanders alone in her AI world, my Metamorph songs seek aspects of togetherness, gothic romance and love."

Margot Day (@margotday) on YouTube
Margot Day (@margotday) on Spotify

Sara Storm Of Nail Club And Latex Cop

And coming from New Orleans, is yet a third electronics artist, **sara storm** who's in the a-f subgenre creating giddy tunes with her projects **Nail Club** and **Latex Cop**.



Instagram: Sara Storm (@sara.storm) finds inspiration in studies of criminal justice and penal systems

Storm writes: "I loved Barbie in my youth. I had every product imaginable. I could tell at Christmas just by the packaging if I had been given a Barbie. Peeking her nose through the wrapping paper, I couldn't help sometimes but to indulge in pushing a small line of paper back to cheat myself of the experience of surprise to know exactly which model I had been given. Once I asked my aunt if I would have her like Barbie as I grew older, I couldn't comprehend that this doll inventor was perfect, something that no human being could be capable of. It was after this experience, I lost the favor of Barbie fever."

Storm continues: "One of the most anticipated films of 2023 was Barbie. I was on the theater experience, having seen the outfit images spread on the internet of Barbie fever. The release-hype of girls and men became a summer phenomenon and everyone asked 'how you seen it?' – as one would have maybe asked someone like me about *Doors* or *High School*. When my partner and I finally settled down to tend to watch Barbie we both looked at one another wondering when the film was going to get 'good' or really enjoyable. "Happy" into the film, we figured it just wasn't made for people like us. His favorite part was the set design and mine the patriarchy."

"If Barbie was created to boost Mattel's sales, it was successful. If Barbie was created to complain the patriarchy to its viewers, it was also successful. Though Gerwig wasn't a lone singer in the writing of this film (she co-wrote the feature with Noah Baumbach) many viewers came away from this film viewing it as a female masterpiece. I love a hard time believing that. If this is viewed in the line of feminist theory then, theory less, it's a bit of a mark and has defined into consumer ideology. The global scene where stereotypical Barbie means Barbie Robinson (also called just Barbie) and is faced with the dilemma that to stay in that world is to wear stilettos or to go to the real world is to wear flats. Barbie leaves women these two options. You either ignore the broken posing of femininity or you go genuine. Stereotypical Barbie chooses the genuine life in the end while going to the gynecologist. The ending of the film left me feeling that instead of the exciting prospect of a career, the only exciting thing she could have endured was anatomy. Roll credits."

"While we're living in the times of cinema that is a sort of pushing boundaries, Barbie has enticed all ages but misses the logical steps. This was made for consumers and they consumed it. They spent two hours with it, but what did we walk away with? It didn't change Hollywood, so they ignored the director and their primary obstacle when they gave Ryan Reynolds an Oscar. But, did it change us? Could a film like Barbie reduce the narrative of their giving feminist politics in 2024 or did we completely miss the third wave?"

Sara Storm (@sara.storm) on Instagram
Nail Club (@nailclub) on Bandcamp
Goth Music (@gothmusic) on Bandcamp

Emily Zuzik Of Waves

Emily Zuzik is an LA based singer/songwriter writing in electronics, with her innovative duo **Waves**, and also as an artist in the the-pop and rock genres.



Instagram: Emily Zuzik (@emiliezuzik) Electronics And Rock And Roll

Zuzik writes: "It's hard to say what was most moving about the movie Barbie for me. The biggest take-away was America Ferrara's speech about the duplicitous roles of women in modern society, and how confining they are, both on the surface as well as emotionally to the wellness of the woman in question. I found that to be where my mind regularly goes these days, struggling to be both an independent entity of my child, as well as a mother/guardian to her child, a partner, and yet cautiousness from the relationship with my partner, as well as her to myself and cover goals, a partner, and yet a lot of women related to that, some and it was clearly performed well and effectively."

"There were other examples of this duplicitous nature that came up for me when the scene reversed the power dynamic in *Barbie*. Suddenly, women had to be subservient to men and yet were still being idolized by them, yet not respected by them. Many of us grew up with this brokened scenario – being taught to want the male gaze as a source of power only to give up your power once obtained by it. This part of the movie I found tremendously triggering and fueled those old feelings of rebellion and drive to equalize the playing field. It was like Gerwig's will to either punish all the right buttons."

Photo of Emily Zuzik by Kameron Shuchette (2024).

Emily Zuzik (@emiliezuzik) on Instagram
Emily Zuzik (@emiliezuzik) on YouTube
Emily Zuzik (@emiliezuzik) on Spotify

Recommended viewing:
Tina Turner: Rethinking Barbie (2016)
Barbie (2023)



Photo of Barbie Doll in 4-Flora sweater by Flomo. on Adobe Stock dot com.

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Keith
Keith is a writer based in Southern California where he lives and creates music, visual art, theater and film.

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