


Popbitch: celebrity journalism gets ethical?

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Popbitch may not be the biggest celebrity gossip website in the world but it is one of the most interesting.

Founder/boss Camilla Wright came to talk to the [Polis Summer School](#), which in itself is an unusual assignment for a showbusiness journalist.



Popbitch does something quite simple. It gathers gossip from readers, publicists, hangers-on and the stars themselves and then puts it out as an email as well as on its website. It is a great (and relatively rare) example of a thriving online journalism business.

Camilla had some interesting things to say about the celeb biz:

It's economically significant: Britney is an industry that employes hundreds of people directly and generates about \$150 million per annum.

It's changing. The Internet opened up everything by taking control away from the publicists and allowing the public their moment of glory online. At first the showbiz industry tried to control the flow of information but with the Internet it was impossible to stop the bloggers. Now the showbiz industry pays bloggers to write about the 'stars'. But it is still a relatively open system. Celebs can manage their publicity but they can't control it.




And Popbitch is surprisingly moral. Camilla is just as restricted by the libel laws as anyone else. In fact, as a small scale operation she is more vulnerable in some ways. But she sees her role as being critical of celebrity, holding showbusiness to account:

"There is sometimes a big gap between real life and the image they project and that is where we find the story"

She has clear limits on what she will expose. So women's weight is not on the agenda, children are not fair game and she won't take money to promote someone's wedding.

But while she may show the celebs in a poor light she also believes that celebrity culture has brought a lot of joy to the world and is now a part of politics. So Tony Blair was a politician with celebrity qualities while Gordon is not. You can decide if that's a good thing or not.

And she makes the interesting point that the circle may have turned. Are we now becoming bored of people who are only famous because they are famous? Are we becoming more interested in finding out more about serious actors who win Oscars, for example, rather than 'C List' soap stars? The trouble is, says Camilla, the serious people are too busy being serious to have the time to be celebs.

  As for the students, their two favourite recent celeb stories were [Danielle Cicarelli's](#) banned YouTube-d romp in the sea and Disney presenter [Miley Cyrus'](#) best-selling off the shoulder appearance in Vogue. 

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