

Today is Sinéad O'Connor vs. The World Day

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This post began life on Facebook. Had I written it today I would have noted my sources, but I don't think any of this is hard to look up.

20 years ago today, Sinéad O'Connor tore up a picture of the pope on SNL in protest of the sexual abuse of children by catholic priests, and the church cover-up. It ended her brief career in mainstream pop. People thought she was a lunatic. Catholic priests don't abuse children! Right. The next week's SNL host Joe Pesci said he "would have given her such a smack."

Two years earlier O'Connor had refused to play at a New Jersey venue if they played the national anthem before she went on stage. She doesn't like national anthems, thinks they have nothing to do with music and are mostly war songs full of "nationalist tripe." Sounds about right to me, but the next night Frank Sinatra was on the same stage and said he would "like to kick her in the ass." So that was kind of a theme.

O'Connor appeared on Bob Dylan's 30th anniversary concert two weeks after the SNL event. I watched this on Swedish tv. Kris Kristofferson announced her, clearly apprehensive of what would happen. When she got on stage the thousands in the audience roared. She smiled, walked up to the mike and said thank you. Then her face went blank as she realized that most of the people were booing and screaming. (Let's call it "Christian Rage.") She stood silent for a moment, waved to her band to be quiet, pulled out her ear plugs, and shouted an a capella version of Bob Marley's "War" over the noise. (The same she had performed at SNL.) After staring at the furious mob for a few more seconds, she walked off stage and collapsed into Kris Kristofferson's arms. We didn't have SNL so I had no idea what this was about, but I was stunned. Something real just happened on tv.

One last story. O'Connor had never met Prince when she recorded his Nothing Compares 2 U, but afterward she was invited to his mansion. Prince, being a

famous Jehovah's Witness, started to chastise her for swearing during interviews. (Her Twitter feed—by the way—is still one of the least family friendly.) When she told him to fuck off, he became, according to her, violent. She couldn't fight him, she said later, he packs a punch, but there was a lot of spitting. Apparently she wasn't applying for the Prince Babe Troupe.

So, anyway, the SNL and Dylan concert episodes are easy enough to find on YouTube. I'll end with something from years before anything of great international significance happened to Sinéad O'Connor. Happy 20th anniversary, girl! Sinéad O'Connor - Troy (Pinkpop Festival 1988)

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