

POPSTAR: NEVER STOP NEVER STOPPING (2016)

- Rated R for some graphic nudity, language throughout, sexual content and drug use
- N/A million dollar budget
- 1 hour and 27 minutes
- Directed by Akiva Schaffer, Jorma Taccone
- Co-producer Judd Apatow

QUICK THOUGHTS

- Phil Svitek
- Demetri Panos
- Marisa Serafini
- Stephanie Wenger

DEVELOPMENT

- Based Bieber documentary and the One Direction Documentary
- Andy Samberg and Judd Apatow's first collaboration
- Inspiration for the film: "We'd been talking about this new genre of movie, the *popumentary*, if you will. It's a glossier version of a rock documentary and all these pop bands have had them. They're sort of like borderline propaganda from their own camp — just, like, fluffy documentaries that track their tours and lives and are really bubbly and awesome to look at and fun to watch." – Andy Samberg
- Samberg gives a bit of insight into the process of creating this story: "As we were writing *Popstar*, we took inspiration for specific jokes and scenes from a lot of the documentaries we watched. For example, Conner's magical wardrobe change on stage plays homage to Katy Perry, and Conner drumming as a baby is a nod to Justin Bieber."
- The guys admit they were inspired by the likes of the early documentary films of such superstars as Miley Cyrus, Justin Bieber and Katy Perry. "We had talked about this concept for 10 years and then with the advent of so many documentaries on pop stars, it focused us on the story," offers Samberg. "Akiva had a casual meeting with Judd, talking about various projects, and Judd said we should definitely make a mockumentary based on all the documentaries in the last few years about pop stars."

WRITING

- Andy Samberg, Akiva Schaffer and Jorma Taccone wrote it
- In the writing process of this, we watched a ton of pop documentaries," said Taccone. "
- Watching the [One Direction](#) documentary in 3-D was the pinnacle of our research.
- "This [movie] is our therapy on a grand scale," Samberg jokes. "We've been saying that the characters in the movie, The Style Boyz, are like us if we weren't self-aware."
- Satire of young stardom/child stars
- It has definitely been trippy how many things we wrote two years ago have since happened in real life and are no longer a joke. It's just indicative of the big theme of the movie, which is that things happen so fast. With social media culture and everything? You can get chewed up and spit out quick." – Andy Samberg

STORY/CAST

- **POINT OF DISCUSSION:** music mockumentary plotline - guy becomes too big for his own good
- **POINT OF DISCUSSION:**
- **POINT OF DISCUSSION**

CAMEOS: Nas, 50 Cent, Usher, Questlove, Mariah Carey, Pharrell Williams, Ringo Starr, Pink, Maya Rudolph, Bill Hader, Tim Meadows, Seal, T-Pain, Joan Cusack
CMZ offices, where comedians like Chelsea Peretti and Will Arnett play caricatures of TMZ reporters.

Andy Samberg (Conner)

- SNL, Brooklyn Nine-Nine
- Featured player on one of Samberg's SNL Digital Shorts
- "We wanted a character we could fall easily into. The voice we chose is everyone we went to high school in the Bay Area. We made the character from Sacramento so it wasn't too blatant, but the characters definitely all have a big Bay Area vibe. I'm not known as a super deft character actor" - Samberg
- "Conner is so pretentious and sometimes unlikeable, and he has so many costume changes that somewhat reflects his insecurity," she adds. "We borrowed from everyone in the R&B and pop male culture over the last 10 years."

Akiva Schaffer (Farmer)

Jorma Taccone (Owen)

Imogen Poots (Ashley, GF of Conner)

- "[Andy] has a girlfriend played by Imogen Poots who is a kind of like a Jennifer Lawrence in that she's in a YA franchise. She's is a famous one called Cube Theorem. That's where the similarities between her and Jennifer Lawrence end, but like any of those, she's an up and coming starlet who everybody knows and loves. And they do have some tumultuous times during it, so I guess that would be a kind of parallel. He's always talking about how long distance sucks, kind of the way Katy did, and then she visits, and it is kind of exciting like when Russell Brand was in the corner. Look he was there! It's kind of [in] the same style."

EASTER EGGS / TRIVIA

- The third film this year that has started both Bill Hader and May Rudolph ("The Angry Birds Movie" and "Maggie's Plan")
- Conner's song "Equal Rights" is a parody of Macklemore's "Same Love"
- Placing Conner's album in people's appliances, and the public outcry against it is a parody of U2 placing their album on iTunes accounts without permission
- A small clip from an old Lonely Island video "Kablamo" is seen in the movie
- Comparisons to Bieber:
 - Conner4Real has a turtle and Bieber had a monkey (both exotic animals)
 - Anne Frank reference
 - Beginning of film features Conner as a baby playing drums as Bieber did
 - The slogan of the movie is never stop never stopping and Justin Bieber's movie slogan was never say never

DIRECTING

- (Akiva Schaffer, Jorma Taccone- The Lonely Island)
- Both play Conner's former boy-bandmates.
- Written, directed, and produced by Samberg and his long-time partners, Jorma Taccone and Akiva Schaffer (known collectively as The Lonely Island). Been friends since Junior High.
- Taccone and Schaffer cleared their schedules to work on *Popstar* full time. All three say that Apatow was a key influence on the movie's tone. "It's actually his dick in the window of the car," jokes Schaffer, referring to a moment of full-frontal physical comedy. ""He wanted to show it because he was like, 'I've had this normal but really well-proportioned dick my whole life, and I've never shown it. And I'm afraid I'm getting older and going to lose the bod soon.' "
- Loved the mockumentary style especially with the number of real concert films released
- It's not lost on the trio that the bar for this style of movie has been set very high since *Spinal Tap's* 1984 release. Says Samberg: "*Spinal Tap* is one of the greatest comedies every made but because we're pointing at the pop world today and how big the scale is for those concerts, we're able to give this movie a more cinematic feel through art design and cinematography than simply having a fly-on-the-wall documentary feel
- Production wrapped, it was time to reflect on the comedy that was *Popstar: Never Stop Never Stopping*. According to one of the directors, however, there was one VIP during shooting who stood out. Commends Schaffer: "Andy showed up to set every single day on this movie. He was there for every scene he was in, and he was there for the scenes he wasn't in. So, he deserves a pat on the back for that."
- Apatow adds that the director is being way too humble. He concludes: "This is the first feature that Jorma and Akiva have co-directed together. It was a great experience for them because it was an enormous amount of work. A fake documentary like this has a countless amount of scenes, and the only way it can be done is to have two hilarious and brilliant guys running around getting everything."

PRODUCTION/CINEMATOGRAPHY

- WB Studios Backlot
- **Principal photography** on the film began on May 14, 2015, announced by [Universal Pictures](#) under the working title *Conner4real*
- Samberg then made a guest appearance on the season finale of [Saturday Night Live](#), on May 21, 2016
- Promoted as a new **SNL Digital Short**, he appeared in character as Conner4real and debuted a song from the movie ("Finest Girl")
- Taccone and Schaffer received guest writing credits for the episode
- Production began May 13, 2015, at the Big Sky Ranch in Simi Valley, California, which was home to Lawrence's bucolic farm life. The team then shot for seven weeks around the Los Angeles area. "When we set out to make this movie, we wanted to take what we did with 'Digital Shorts' for *Saturday Night Live*, and put everything on a much bigger scale," explains Samberg. "There are huge sets, a record full of new songs and the comedy is heightened."
- Production designer Jon Billington came to the project with credits on many action movies (most recently *World War Z*), and his array of talents were what the filmmakers needed to take the visuals on the movie to the next level

- “A lot of the movie has scenes that were not much bigger than our ‘Digital Shorts,’” he adds. “But for the proposal scene and the concerts, it was shot on a very large scale, and we poured a lot of money into those sequences to open them up and give it a more cinematic feel.”
- A documentary is, as Billington puts it, “an anti-film from a design point of view,” so there had to be scope to every location, as well offer cinematographer Brandon Trost the best possible settings and scenery to shoot. Recently, Trost had neatly straddled the line of serious comedy and pratfall cinema with his work on *Neighbors*
- To absorb how to re-create the feel of a live concert, Billington and the filmmakers went to a Maroon 5 concert at The Forum in Inglewood, California, before production began. That combined with viewings of the One Direction, Justin Bieber and Katy Perry documentaries led Billington to start the process with 3D models and then tested out lighting concepts
- Building the sets at The Forum was done in conjunction with ANTON GOSS, who was nominated for an art direction Emmy for his work on *The Voice*, and light designer OSCAR DOMINGUEZ, who won an Emmy for his work on *The Voice*
 - “We had to invent a whole stage show that’s as spectacular as any of the huge stage shows that Katy Perry and Justin Bieber put on,” notes Rothman. “The whole point of the movie, visually, is that it’s a concert movie.”
- The proposal sequence of wolves was shot at the scenic Saddleback Ranch on Mulholland Highway in Malibu. A winery that also hosts many weddings, the location also has exotic animals on the grounds as well. “It was a gorgeous location, but then the randomness of a giraffe in the background just fit in with the ridiculousness of it all,” notes Billington
 - The scene appears more like a wedding scene, but as Billington observes: “When you have a complete idiot, with far too much money and very little taste who wants to propose to his girlfriend...it makes more sense to design it as a celebrity wedding.”
- The Forum served as the location for the concert performances as well as dressing room scenes where Conner has it out with any number of haters. The Long Beach Arena was used for pre-concert stage rigging sequences, and the Hollywood Athletic Club was turned into Conner’s concert rehearsal space
- Given that so many music personalities live in Calabasas, California, a somewhat garish McMansion was not hard to find off of Mulholland Highway. This property served as Conner’s house
 - As Samberg notes of the house: “It’s one of the few sets in the movie that is really a statement about Conner and what and who he is.” Of course, the set decoration and the backyard topiary is most definitely an invention of Billington’s art department and did not come with the house
- “There are at least 20 hilarious things that the art department place inside and outside that house that illustrate when someone with no taste and too much money is left to his own devices,” says Rothman
- Sophie De Rakoff is the movie’s costume designer and her earlier career as a stylist for music videos helped her as she broke the movie down into two parts: the Style Boyz (when the guys were initially together as a boy band) and then later when Conner became a solo act
- “While this is contemporary but not fact-based, there was license to create something that was relevant and current but also explore the comedic nature of what this world gives you,” says De Rakoff. “You take it to the edge of ridiculousness and then dial it back just a touch. That made this film so fun to design.”

- As Rothman points out: “Some of the most talented costume designers in the world work for pop stars, so to beat them at their own game we have someone like Sophie with vast experience in both areas.”
- “The main inspiration we looked to for the Style Boyz was the very early Beastie Boys in the late ’80s, early ’90s,” says De Rakoff. “It’s wasn’t baggy pants, though. It was narrow jeans, varsity jackets, motorcycle jackets—which was very specific to the Beastie Boys because they didn’t appropriate black culture.”
- Conner has more than 100 outfits worn in the movie. “Andy was very involved in the fitting process,” says the costumer. “Every now and then I would bring him something too ridiculous, and we would have a good laugh over it,” says DeRakoff.
- When it came to dressing Hunter the Hungry, DeRakoff had to go in an entirely different direction. “Chris is from Chicago and even though he’s playing a character, the attitude of Chicago still comes through. We looked at the rapper Tyga and that balance between street and modern, not too polished, seemed just right for the character of Hunter.”

EDITING/VFX

- Craig Alpert, Jamie Gross, Stacey Schroeder edited
- Craig is known for Borat, The Boss, Matrix Revolutions, Funny People, The Sitter
- Jamie known for Vacation, Role Models, MacGruber, Hot Tub Time Machine 2
- Stacey known for Grudge Match, You’re the Worst, Eastbound & Down,

SOUND/MUSIC

- At its core, the movie (just like The Lonely Island shorts) revolves around the music, all of which was written by Samberg, Schaffer & Taccone. “Our ‘Digital Shorts’ and music totally prepared us to make this movie,” says Samberg. “Blending the music into an authentic comedy was a natural evolution of what we had been doing.”
- Schaffer adds, dryly: “We took the music we are known for and added more bad words and nudity, all the things you are looking for in a major motion picture. This is definitely something that has never been done before.”
- “When their videos first started appearing a lot of people in the comedy world were either insecure or in full on panic attack mode because Andy, Jorma and Akiva were so confident, funny and fearless and their work was fully formed on arrival,” says Rothman. “When I first saw it, it really made me want to up my game. I admit that I wish I had done what they did.”
- Apatow walks us through the guys’ musicality: “The three of them have their process. They go in a room, come back out, and have the material and what they believe should be done. It took a long time to write the music for this film. We gave ourselves a year to write the script, and a year to write the songs. Once they had the songs, we were able to bring in modern pop-music producers to help produce them. They were buying samples from the same people the biggest music stars in the world do, so the process was done like they were the biggest pop stars in the world.”
- Still, the music the filmmakers created is not Lonely Island music, as the songs were written specifically for Owen, Lawrence and Conner. “What amazes me is that—whether it’s reggae, pop or pop-rap—these three guys are experts in so many genres of music. Every song they create is fully authentic and full of details that only the biggest fan of the genre would be able to pick out,” says Rothman. “There is so little difference in the songs they are making fun of and the real music for consumers is that if they changed the lyrics from jokes to more vague stuff, they could top the charts.”

- The trio performs in the movie in flashbacks as the Style Boyz (a la the Beastie Boys) that had hits such as “Karate Guy” and their big dance hit “Donkey Roll.” Notes Samberg: “We get a lot of different beats from producers, which is how we made our albums, but here we have specific premises we wanted to execute. So the beat has to fit our ideas, not the other way around.”
- *Popstar: Never Stop Never Stopping* would have been dead in the water without the brilliant work of composer Matthew Compton and music supervisor Randall Poster and George Drakoulias. Their work alongside the Lonely Island to make the film feel like an actual pop-music documentary was brilliant, exhaustive and years-long.
- The music for the group was based in hip-hop while Conner’s solo career featured music that was more straight-up pop with a healthy dose of Auto-Tune. Among Conner’s hit songs are “Bin Laden” (In Conner’s mind he thinks it’s just a good old-fashioned love song) and “Equal Rights” (Conner’ statement about gay marriage...while at the same time reminding everyone he’s straight).
- Songs: Equal Rights, Mona Lisa, I’m So Humble
- 3 full songs that didn’t make it into the movie, 5 songs that are extended that did make it into the movie. There is 1 song with Akon that didn’t make the cut.
- Wrote 50-60 songs, some incomplete.
- “We get sent hundreds of them from producers who are unknown, all the way up to producers who are pretty known.”- Schaffer
- 4 full Lonely Album CDs including the Popstar Soundtrack
- “The soundtrack is a new Lonely Island record. There’s more of just me or me with a guest on it than all three of us because of the structure of the story, and it’s a little more pop influenced. Generally we’re more hyper rap and hip-hop stuff, [but] there’s more singing. I’m doing more singing than I ever have before; we got real comfortable with the autotune (laughs). It’s kind of like trying to mirror the trends in popular music now anyhow, which is a lot of people are rapping and singing on their own songs, so that was more the angle we took with it.”- Samberg
- Popstar: Never Stop Never Stopping Tracks:
 - 01 I’m So Humble [ft. Adam Levine]
 - 02 Hot New Single (Dialogue)
 - 03 Equal Rights [ft. P!nk]
 - 04 Turn Up the Beef [ft. Emma Stone]
 - 05 Finest Girl (Bin Laden Song)
 - 06 Mona Lisa
 - 07 Are or Aren’t? (Dialogue)
 - 08 Hunter the Hungry Is Gon’ Eat
 - 09 Should I Move? [ft. Akon]
 - 10 2 Banditos
 - 11 Things in My Jeep [ft. Linkin Park]
 - 12 Kill This Music (Dialogue)
 - 13 Ashley Wednesday [feat. Seal]
 - 14 Fuck Off
 - 15 Donkey Roll
 - 16 Trip to Spain (Dialogue)
 - 17 Ibitha
 - 18 Owen’s Song
 - 19 What Was That Beat? (Dialogue)

- 20 Sick Glenda
- 21 Incredible Thoughts
- 22 Me Likey Dat
- 23 Legalize It
- 24 I'm A Weirdo
- 25 Karate Guy
- 26 Rock Roll Skate
- 27 Hey Ya Ho
- 28 Maximus
- Donkey Roll instructions - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mRVK8-XfEU>

PROMOTION

- On May 10, 2016, Samberg made an appearance on NBC's *The Voice* in character as Conner4real to perform "I'm So Humble", alongside judge Adam Levine, and give answers to contestants in a humorous Q&A session
- Samberg claims it is about the music industry as a whole on Late Show with Seth Meyers

BOX OFFICE

- Domestic Summary
 - Opening Weekend: \$4,698,715
 - (#8 rank, 2,311 theaters, \$2,033 average)
- Widest Release: 2,311 theaters
- In Release: 6 days / 0.9 weeks
- In the United States, *Popstar: Never Stop Never Stopping* opened on June 3, 2016, alongside *Me Before You* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Out of the Shadows*. It was expected to gross around \$7 million from 2,311 theaters in its opening weekend
- The film grossed \$322,000 from its Thursday previews and \$1.8 million on its first day
- In its opening weekend, the film grossed \$4.6 million, finishing 8th at the box office

RECEPTION

- *Popstar: Never Stop Never Stopping* has received positive reviews from critics
- On [Rotten Tomatoes](#), the film has a rating of 76%, based on 111 reviews, with an average rating of 6.6/10
- The site's critical consensus reads, "*Popstar: Never Stop Never Stopping* updates the rock mockumentary for the 21st century mainstream – and hits many of its low-hanging targets with side-splitting impact."
- On [Metacritic](#), the film has a score of 68 out of 100, based on 41 critics, indicating "generally favorable reviews"
- On [CinemaScore](#), audiences gave the film an average grade of "B" on an A+ to F scale
- Samberg claims it is about the music industry as a whole on Late Show with Seth Meyers

SEQUEL

- Potentially – Bieber did a second documentary
- Could be about the return of the Style Boyz? Or Conner going to rehab?

FINAL THOUGHTS