



# 'Euphoria': Modern Day Twist on Coming Of Age

*Sex, Addiction, Money: Euphoria tackles the problems young adults are currently facing*



(left to right): Rue, Cassie, Kat, Jules and Lexi at the Halloween party. (Photo from Seventeen Magazine)

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The wait is finally over as millions tuned in to watch the first episode of the highly anticipated season 2.

Euphoria is the American teen drama phenomenon, penned by Sam Levinson for television channel HBO. The show follows the protagonist, Rue, captured by child star, Zendaya. Rue navigates being a functioning drug addict, going to school and grieving the death of her father. Collectively, the characters explore and struggle with growing up and issues such as money, drugs and relationships - which Rue narrates in each episode, as she acts as the voice

of reason for these characters as well as somehow knowing all the intricate details about events and situations take place.

Rue's drug addiction plays a huge role within the first season as she can see how it is negatively

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**"Coming of Age has always been the voice of young adults."**

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affecting both her family and relationship with her girlfriend, Jules - who struggles with her identity throughout the show. From the initial announcement of the show in 2019, it has received accolades and praise from entertainment outlets such as BuzzFeed and Esquire. Particularly the show has demonstrated relatability towards 'Gener-

ation Z' who are the show's main audience due to the portrayal of the high school orientated characters.

Relatability can arguably be presented as an important factor within a television show as it allows an audience to connect with the characters and to become indirectly attached to them when there is a change in the situation involving these characters such as death, heartbreak and family troubles, which in turn allows them to keep anticipation up when waiting for the arrival of the new episodes, which drop once a week, which leaves watchers wanting more. Connecting to Euphoria, this theme is attractive to younger viewers as they empathise with the experiences and coming of age issues that provide a scope into real life

problems that they may encounter whilst growing up.

Despite the popularity of the show itself, it can be found that, the themes of teenage shows are the most relevant as this is the longest period of our lives: Childhood Which has a detrimental effect on human beings as they are slowly transitioning into adulthood. The British television show, 'Skins,' which aired in 2007, can be compared to Euphoria as having similarities in their context. For example, Skins' character Cassie Ainsley, simply known as 'Cass,' was admitted to a psychiatric and addiction home for drug usage and eating disorders. The episode showed Cassie facing the repercussions of her addiction, and just like Rue, how it was affecting her relationship with her boyfriend, Sid.

Having binge-watched a plethora of 'Coming of Age' shows and movies ('Me and Earl and the Dying Girl' and '10 Things I Hate About You' deserve an honourable mention!) I can honestly say there are some evident similarities across the genre, most of them particularly focusing on characters suffering through immense changes such as experiencing trauma or starting high school. Euphoria came to me as a pleasant surprise. From the cinematography to the cast, I had a feeling this show would be right up my alley. Seeing Zendaya as protagonist 'Rue' and not 'Rocky' from Disney's hit dance sitcom Shake It Up, felt weird as this was a completely different setting, with Zendaya being much older and portraying a more serious, multi-dimensional character with fatal flaws. Effortlessly, she truly

embodied the role and engaged well with the other characters in the show, her love interest Jules for example. The relevance of the show stems from the themes portrayed. This reflects the plight of Gen Z. Despite that, it offers a stark outlook on character actions and their consequences along with

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**"Coming of Age shows are repackaged. These shows are evolving year by year to fit new problems faced by Gen-Z."**

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raw cinematography that will draw you into the story. 'Coming of Age' shows tend to be niche; as these shows are aimed at their teen audience, however, Euphoria zooms in on other characters; I.e: the parents, demonstrating how they are affected by their children's actions and their coping mechanisms going forward. As I've already mentioned, similarities are evident and later, so will the cultural impact of the show on young, digital audiences.

The show is also loosely based on the Israeli television show, 'Euphoria,' which followed a group of 17-year-olds who take drugs and act carelessly, just like the characters in the 2019 show. Both shows can be compared to the current take on coming of age shows, as the themes are most similar. Despite show rising in popularity due to the 'attractive cast' or relatability aspects, a question that comes to mind is whether this show will still be a 'trend' or just a phase? Having barely watched the show but believing that social media has created awareness about the show, despite not being interested

in watching it himself, Matthew Valdez believes: "We've had shows with similar backgrounds already, Skins, Riverdale, Stranger things just to name a few. Unless the show is a cinematic masterpiece i.e being shot well, it will have little chance of survival," he continues: "Coming of age is already a widely repackaged genre in both film and television, and it is near impossible to keep up with all the different experiences and pressures teenagers go through."

Euphoria has gained immense support from a young audience, with the influence of the show pouring onto social media, especially TikTok. Individuals have taken to the application to create their own make-up inspired looks from the Halloween episode and have also hosted 'Euphoria themed parties,' taking inspiration from the event. These looks have been plastered all over 'For you Pages,' which are essentially personalised algorithm timelines, due to their specificity users are able to view all kinds of content tailored to specific audiences.

Matthew states: "The show fits the y2k aesthetic which is trending on TikTok now is attracting the teenage audience that watches Euphoria," he then goes on to say: "Specifically the character Maddie," who is portrayed by Alexa Demie, "Is influencing the way teenage girls are dressing. They want that dress she wore in a particular episode." With the rise of accessible digital content creation, we are able to communicate about

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# Modern Twist: 'Euphoria'

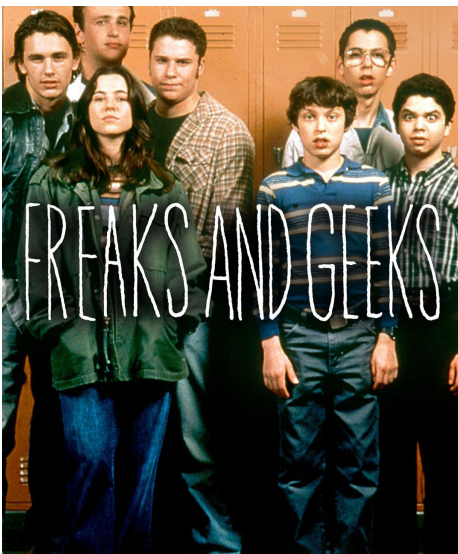
television shows we have engaged in over social media and create videos, memes or montages that represent our inspiration from particular episodes or seasons. Despite show rising in popularity due to the 'attractive cast' or relatability aspects, a question that comes to mind is whether this show will be remembered or even watched in ten years as something future generations come back to either learn from or compare the experiences that were had during this time. But for now, the show is available for streaming only on HBO.

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## *Top 5: Coming of Age Shows You Have To Watch*

### 1) 'Freaks and Geeks,' (1999)

Co created by comedy legend-Judd Apatow, this show follows a group of uncanny, misfit teenagers who find school a bit of a chore and wish to 'fit in' to the teen world, starring Seth Rogen and Jason Segel.



### 2) 'Daria,' (1997)

Airing on the entertainment network, MTV, Daria Morgendorffer is the protagonist in her own cynical world. She attempts to be mysterious, a person of few words and navigating in a lively school environment.



### 3) 'Atypical,' (2017)

This comedy follows Sam, who is on the autism spectrum and an avid penguin enthusiast, has chosen to have headfirst start at his adult life - attempting to be independent, without relying on help from his sister, Casey or his parents.



### 4) 'Everything Sucks,' (2018)

This teen drama is set in a town called 'Boring, Ore,' following a group of teenagers part of the AV and Drama club who are living without advanced technology, such as mobile phones.



### 5) 'Sex Education,' (2019)

This comedy drama has a huge scope on the way sexual health is navigating through a both sexually active group of students and sexual beginners (people who are just learning about their bodies).

