

Super Bowl Buzz and Backlash: Kendrick Lamar's Halftime Show Fuels Familiar Debate

Tessa Yohan | March 28th, 2025



Kendrick Lamar performs during halftime of the NFL Super Bowl 59 football game between the Kansas City Chiefs and the Philadelphia Eagles, Sunday, Feb. 9, 2025, in New Orleans. (AP Photo/Frank Franklin II)

Reflecting on the recent Super Bowl LIX Halftime Show, which took place just a couple of months ago in February 2025 and featured Kendrick Lamar, the familiar patterns of praise and criticism emerged, amplified this year by some notable pre-show drama. While the Super Bowl remains a monumental cultural event, drawing in millions of viewers each year, it's undeniable that a significant portion of the population expresses dissatisfaction with various aspects of the spectacle. Beyond the game's outcome, criticisms often surface regarding the halftime show, commercialization, and the overall hype surrounding the event.

Leading up to the performance, there was significant buzz and speculation, particularly surrounding rumors of a potential appearance or acknowledgment related to the ongoing public feud between Kendrick Lamar and Drake. While the performance didn't explicitly address the rivalry, subtle undertones and lyrical choices were dissected by fans and media alike, fueling online debate and adding an extra layer of intrigue to the event. This pre-show "Drake drama," even if ultimately more speculative than realized on stage, undoubtedly contributed to the overall hype and heightened scrutiny surrounding Lamar's performance.

A recurring theme in the discourse is that not everything is universally appealing. Some people struggle to accept that not every part of the Super Bowl is designed for them personally. This highlights a growing fragmentation of tastes and preferences, particularly regarding the halftime show. For years, the halftime performance has been a focal point of discussion, often sparking controversy and debate. What resonates with one demographic can leave another feeling disconnected or even alienated.

Expectations surrounding the Super Bowl are consistently sky-high, contributing to some disappointment. The event's sheer scale and production value set an almost unattainable bar, leading some to feel let down even when the reality is impressive. These constantly elevated expectations make it difficult for people to appreciate the entertainment and the hard work involved in putting it all together.

Beyond the celebrity gossip, the halftime show also sparked discussions regarding potential political statements embedded within Lamar's performance. Known for his socially conscious lyrics and commentary, some viewers interpreted specific visuals, lyrical inflections, and stage

arrangements as allusions to contemporary social and political issues. As is often the case with such performances, this drew both praise for using the platform to address important topics and criticism from those who prefer the Super Bowl to remain apolitical. The familiar divide emerged, with some celebrating the artistic expression and others finding it divisive or inappropriate for the setting. The trend of Super Bowl halftime shows sparking divided opinions continues, even with an artist as critically acclaimed as Kendrick Lamar taking the stage, and the added elements of celebrity drama and political undertones only intensified the conversations and differing viewpoints. The challenge of creating a halftime show that satisfies such a vast and diverse audience, navigating the complexities of entertainment, celebrity culture, and social commentary, remains a significant hurdle for organizers.

The halftime show, in particular, has become a lightning rod for criticism. The evolving landscape of popular music, where artists can achieve massive followings without mainstream recognition, often leads to confusion and disconnect among audience segments. We're in an era where artists can have huge fanbases without being household names, leading to performances that seem targeted and leave a significant portion of the audience feeling they're "not getting it." Including specific references or guest appearances, like mentions of certain celebrities, can further alienate viewers unfamiliar with those figures.

Looking back at the past 15 years, the halftime show has been no stranger to drama and controversy. From wardrobe malfunctions to perceived political messaging, performances have a history of sparking widespread discussion, often hostile. While some viewers have found these moments entertaining or thought-provoking, others have been critical of the choices made by the performers and organizers. This consistent pattern of drama has led some to tune out the noise surrounding the halftime show simply.

While the Super Bowl remains a cultural behemoth, the reasons for its dislike are multifaceted. Varying tastes, inflated expectations, controversies surrounding the halftime show, and concerns about commercialization all contribute to a segment of the population feeling disconnected or dissatisfied with the "Big Game." As the event continues to evolve, the challenge for organizers will be to navigate these diverse perspectives and find a way to resonate with a broader audience.