The Queen and the Queen Bey: a very British guide to popstardom

They may have reigned in different arenas, but both have mastered the art of mystique and control.

By Lily Wallen

“No Kings” America shouts.

But for one Queen, public opinion isn’t so hostile.

In June Beyoncé wrapped up her six-night mini-residency in Tottenham Hotspur Stadium to make her way to a hat-trick of sold out shows at the Stade-de-France before jetting back to her queendom for the southern leg of the Cowboy Carter Tour’s US dates.

Meanwhile, the American public have been busy reaffirming the whole point of their impossible-to-amend, ironically spiritualised constitution — royalophobia. However, in an America where celebrity is slowly chipping away at God’s spiritual jurisdiction over the nation (ugh, I was trying to avoid the T(rump) word), such principle is *not* devolved to the world of pop. Want to reach the status of music royalty? Follow the QEII playbook just like Beyoncé.

Now, to be clear — I’m not suggesting that Beyoncé bore the weight of a 1200-year-old crown when she released her first single with Destiny’s Child. This is, after all, a light-hearted comparison. But that was in 1998, and pop-culture moves a lot faster than monarchy; if we were to think of popstar years versus royal years in the way we think of dog versus human, then Beyoncé has probably, 27 years into her career, celebrated her platinum jubilee.

How to become a trans-generational megastar, an institution and essentially a superlative (e.g. I am the Beyonce of my siblings)? Never complain, never explain.

The most striking manifestation of the twin spirit shared by our late Queen and the queen of music is their near total lack of dialogue and utmost restraint in dealing out personal insight. In her quietness the Queen sacrificed the broadcast of her personal convictions, as any good constitutional monarch should, to promote the health and long continuity of the Crown. Rumours of infidelity within the late Queen and Prince Philip’s marriage were unaddressed to the end and were, as a result, dwarfed by the public’s recognition of their 70-year union as an institution as dutiful, stable and devoted as the Crown itself; the most intimate details of her life calculated within the framework of public service.

And it isn’t just the House of Windsor that believes in the power of shutting up. In 2016, Beyoncé ended 18 months of near-total silence to drop *Lemonade* — a monumental visual album that intertwined themes of Black power and spousal forgiveness, using her art to address rumours of infidelity that had been swirling throughout her bout of quietness. This was an album that came with no announcement, no promotion and not a word from Beyoncé, but was the first ever to win a Peabody.

Having, in her own words, “retired from the formula of the popstar a very long time ago,” Beyoncé does not tweet, does not sit down for interviews and is hard pressed even to caption her Instagram posts. All this to allow the music to speak for itself, with messages of

transgression, liberation and reclamation received in their purest form; she prefers her work to make an impact as complete bodies that are era-making in their magnitude. In this way both Beyoncé and the Queen share that caesarean quality of seeing their life and work as a contribution to something greater than themselves. They are stoic in their sense of privacy, feeling that their followers and those who look to them for guidance receive it more viscerally when their public work can be isolated from private matters.

Of course, their work is of different worlds, and this is a highly unorthodox comparison; the late Queen concerned by the stability of the Crown and the defence of faith, where Beyoncé is currently two parts through a three-album reclamation arc of Black genres lost to white-washed music history (see her Dance/House album Renaissance and Country album Cowboy Carter). But it's from a shared sense of divine assignment that both women consistently face the world message first, personal life second: domestic chaplain to the late Queen while she was at Balmoral, Kenneth Mackenzie, said the Queen "felt a calling in some way from her people, but more than that, she saw her calling as from almighty God." And it's the "goons" that Beyoncé "rolls with" who form a recurring motif across her more recent music, referring to ancestral missions — like creating a line of Whiskey in the name of her great-grandfather, a moonshine man — that pervade her day-to-day work.

This is not to say the QEII playbook makes for a bulletproof deity. Both women have found themselves defendant to oddly parallel strands of criticism. Erring on the side of caution, one camp of Beysceptics might call her overrated. Slightly less subtle, there's a well-established corner of the internet that have christened her the illuminati devil incarnation. Britons address the royal question in a similarly bisected way; we could probably do without them if not for the tourism cash, skirt the armchair republicans. Blood-sucking, child-endangering network of conspiracy go the tin foils.

Is it then the same credentials that make music royalty as actual royalty? Stretching the comparison from sovereign to superstar, it's fair to say that duty, stability and a deep sense of forbearance underpin the near-regal restraint Beyoncé has shown as she's moved through the physical, digital and now streaming eras of music-making. In becoming a prophet of excellence as well as an artist, she's proven that the more mystified the public is to your personal life, the more potently your artistic expressions land. On both sides of the Atlantic, the message is consistent: keep the crown above the fray and longevity will follow.