AN EXPEDITION

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Tik Tok- either you dislike the app or you are absolutely addicted to it. I personally have never seen any in- between. The app that has made billions laugh, cry and cringe has been banned in India. It even almost got banned in the United States and Australia, and I honestly have absolutely no idea what new steps other governments are going to take to stop the app from apparently scooping out information from their users. Since there’s so much going on with this video- sharing app, I thought it would be cool to go back in time and remember what this app has been through. From being called Musical.ly before it was bought by the Chinese company Bytedance and becoming what we now know as Tik Tok, this app has been through a lot.

Musical.ly was released in 2014, with the purpose of getting a large number of creators to make short videos of themselves simply lip-syncing to their favourite songs and funny audios, including effects and transitions to enhance the quality and the entertainment factor of the videos. Apart from this Musical.ly was also known for their dancers. As far as I remember the stars of Lifetime’s very popular TV show Dance Moms were very popular on the app. Dancers like Lea Elui and Hailey Orona were also known for being great dancers and even for being beautiful young girls. Though I wasn’t really a fan of the dancing sector of Musical.ly, Musical.ly dances ran so that Tik Tok dancing could walk. From the Juju on that Beat dance to the Rolex dance, these were the original ones, and I’m pretty sure they have a huge place in the hearts of all the musers (Musical.ly users).

Moving on from the dancing, we have the lip- syncers of Musical.ly. Probably the weirdest part of Musical.ly to me even though the app was basically made for that purpose, however when I used to watch those videos, I would be taken aback by how “cool” these lip- syncers were. We had Baby Ariel with her finger pointers and Loren Gray for being so beautiful and she’s even a talented acrobat. We also have Jacob Sartorious, I don’t know what his speciality was but I’m sure he was almost every 12-year-old girl’s crush! I don’t understand the purpose of lip- syncing but I’m pretty sure it was the really cool effects and transitions that amazed me, and coming from someone who has tried to do all of these transitions, let me tell you that it certainly is not a piece of cake. It’s also crazy to me how most of these musers got themselves and singing career! And even an acting career! I think Musical.ly was a place where people first tried to get recognition, and then their more professional careers would take off if they’re good enough! Also just saying, the rise of auto-tune has made it possible for anyone and everyone to become a star in the music industry, not sure of how much actual talent is required.

Lastly, we have the comedians of Musical.ly, these people would basically make sounds for everyone else to use to make their own funny but very unoriginal Musical.ly’s. A lot of these musers were also really famous Youtubers like Miranda Sings, Twaimz, Larray etc. Although this part of the app consisted of a majority of lame jokes, 12 year old me was absolutely addicted to everything about it, (so if you ever get to see your old and very cringe Musical.ly’s and the video makes you want to cry, just know that I’ve been there too, yikes). It really shaped my humour into what it is today. Obviously now I’m much older so a lot has changed when it comes to what I find funny but the Musical.ly comedians are the ones whom you would call today as the “OG’s” and they’ll always remind me of crazy but great times.

Now the only difference I find between TikTok and Musical.ly is that there is so much more on TikTok that is popular now compared to Musical.ly. Just as we grew up, so did Musical.ly. Tik Tok now is especially known for the TikTok dancers and the dances they create that become world-wide trends. Amongst the dancers we have by far the most popular- Charli D’Amelio and Addison Rae who basically have taken over most of the app with their dancing. Apart from them you have the very popular but problematic houses like the Hype House and the Sway House, which are collaborative houses situated in Los Angeles to get a bunch of Tik Toks to live together. Honestly there’s so much that goes on between these “straight” Tik Toks I can’t even keep track. Since people seem to find all of the drama entertaining, I doubt it’ll stop.

What I was more interested in was “alternate Tik Tok” that consists of a bunch of not so popular Tik Tokers but they for sure are a hundred times more entertaining, at least to me. You have so many cults and sounds and hashtags that all constitute alternate Tik Tok. From #saveadam2020 to #xiehuapiaopiaobeifengxiaoxiao, everything has a funny backstory and unless you know the backstory nothing will make sense to you.

Tik Tok has also been such a big platform to spread awareness. For example the app was buzzing with information during the Black Lives Matter movement. Though there were a lot of people participating in video chains that became unhelpful “trends”, there were so many videos spreading necessary knowledge, so many people calling out racists etc. I know so many people who have said that they downloaded the app to just chill and enjoy but they ended up becoming very politically charged in the process.

I wish to elaborate on what all I’ve said- the clans and the sectors and the houses etc. But this is just a gist of what’s been happening on this app. When I was young it was a privilege for me to be able to download Musical.ly- a social media app on which I’d spend hours trying to perfect one video and for Tik Tok, not going to lie, I miss being able to spend hours a day just scrolling through hundreds of Tik Toks. A sheer waste of time but sometimes Tik Tok would teach me stuff I had never learnt in school. I bet most of us TikTok addicts can relate!