

# Pop Star: Never Stop Never Stopping (2016)

Rated R. Running time: 1 hour min.

Our content ratings: Violence 2; Language 9; Sex 7/Nudity 5.  
Rated R.

Our star rating (1-5): 4

*For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not  
to think of yourself*

*more highly than you ought to think...*

*Romans 12:3a*

If you liked Christopher Guest's *This is Spinal Tap* and *A Mighty Wind*, you should have a good time watching *Popstar*. Akiva Schaffer and Jorma Taccone's (co-directors) film is also a mockumentary, supposedly chronicling the rise of superstar Conner Friel (Andy Samberg). At first one of the three members of The Style Boyz, whose dance "Donkey Roll" was a huge hit, Conner broke with Lawrence (Akiva Schaffer) because Conner's overly large ego would not give his partner credit for his contributions to their songs. Lawrence drops out of the music business altogether to become a farmer. Owen Bouchard (Jorma Taccone) stays with Conner, serving as his DJ. But what a come down, his chief duty being to press the button on an iPod to play the back-up music.

As a soloist Conner becomes Conner4Real, his album "Thriller, Also," containing the hit song *I'm so Humble*, bringing him fame and wealth. Among its lines are, "Bar none, I am the most humble-est. Number one at the top of the humble list. My apple crumble is by far the most crumble-est. But I act like it tastes bad outta humbleness."

We soon meet his manager Harry (Tim Meadows), who reveals that Conner now has 32 people on his personal payroll. This includes such specialists as a guy to roll his weeds; a Turtle Manager to care for Max, the pet he had been given as a boy; a puncher to hit him in his privates so he would remember his humble past; and a "perspective manipulator," who in photos stands next to Conner to make him seem taller. Conner's next album "CONNquest" includes the single "Equal Rights," which features the singer amidst Gay Pride marchers, but sprinkled throughout he asserts "I'M NOT GAY" to make sure his fans don't get the wrong idea about him. He hires Paula (Sarah Silverman) as publicist. Speaking into the camera, she says, "We'd like to get to the point where Connor is everywhere – like oxygen or gravity or clinical depression." She cooks up a deal with Aquaspin to have Conner's music play on their refrigerators and their appliances when the door is opened. However, so many fans use them to listen to his music that they create giant electrical surges that black out most of the country.

Conner is blamed for the disaster, but of course the cameras stick around to record his fall in as much detail as his rise. His televised proposal of marriage to his girlfriend goes terribly awry when the wolves that are part of the video break loose and attack a performer. And his reluctant use of the equally egotistical Hunter the Hungry (Chris Redd) to open his road show in order to enlarge his dwindling audiences backfires when Hunter proves more popular. It is quite a blow to his ego when Conner is told by Harry that he will be managing Hunter—thus another parting of ways.

The goofiness is mixed in the last act of the film with a touch of forgiveness and character growth, though the reconciliation scene between Conner and Lawrence is one of the funniest that I have seen. Critics are right when they deem this film to be short of the greatness of the Christopher Guest films, but I don't think you'll find a funnier spoof in

the theaters now. And what fun to see scattered throughout the film an A-list of musical celebrities commenting on Conner—such as Questlove, Nas, Usher, Seal, and Ringo Starr. The subtitle *Never Stop Never Stopping* is a take off on the 2011 Justin Bieber concert documentary *Justin Bieber: Never Say Never*, so we can see much of this new film could be regarded as reporting almost as much as fictional, real life pop stars being almost as crazy as Conner. When the apostle Paul warned about over-sized egos, it must have been those like Conner4Real.

I wish I could recommend this funny film for a youth or adult church group, but the extremely vulgar language and the visual penis jokes place this way out of bounds for such groups—those high numbers in the Sex/Nudity portion of our content rating are due to brief full frontal nudity of males as well as females! The staff of even a liberal church would probably land in trouble if they took a group to see it. But who's to know if you go with a trusted friend.

*This review with a set of discussion questions will be in the May issue of VP.*