

LAMENT FOR VIBE VIXEN

by *Racialicious* Special Correspondent [Latoya Peterson](#)

I grabbed the final issue of *Vibe Vixen* off the newsstand today.

Ever since I read about the magazine's demise on MediaBistro.com, I've been on a hunt to make sure I got my last copy. I search the shelves of my local Borders until I spot it, wedged between *DC Style* and *Bethesda Magazine*. Rihanna graces the cover, body bent like a bow, clad in a metallic silver dress.

I scan the coverlines. August/September issue is the celeb glam issue. Rihanna speaks out about Jay-Z. Fall's best boots, lipstick, wine, books, and purses. Two articles on hip-hop.

After doing a quick flip through to make sure I was paying for articles and not just ads, I took it to the register.

Cracking open the magazine, I find that the highlighted articles on the cover do not begin to do this issue justice. The models, as always, are multicultural. The Vixen Verified feature focuses on a new powder by M.A.C. - the three tones shown in the picture would work on Asian, African-American, or Latina complexions with relative ease. Beauty 411, a monthly page dedicated to beauty dilemmas, tackles the issue of going natural for the scissor shy - something I've been wrestling with for some time.

Vibe Vixen is one of the only mags where I see young African-American women discussed - but also young Asian American women and young Latinas. The models reflect this diversity, and while the articles can be skewed toward black women there is the occasional feature about Asian American make-up trends or popular Latinas beyond Jennifer Lopez.

In this issue, there is even a health warning, discussing the issues faced with the feeling that young women have to overachieve. The quote that represents the article is telling:

Latinas suffer from depression more than any other group in the U.S. Asian-American women have the highest rates of suicide in the nation.

Chilling facts are presented, but with another message as the undertone - we need to care about each other. Issues that Latinas face are important. Issues that Asian women face are important. Issues relating to other women of color *are* our issues.

VIBE VIXEN

Vibe Vixen was refreshing that way. Moving in small strides, it began to rectify one of the most egregious flaws in the magazine industry - the continued segregation in demographics in the magazine industry.

The same industry that will relentlessly serve up ten different variations on a magazine aimed at young white women from ages 25-40 seems to feel as though African-American women can be served with one main magazine (*Essence*), that all that is Latin-American can be encapsulated within the covers of *Latina*, and that Asian American women largely do not exist.

[Note: I am aware of the existence of two magazines - *East/West* & *Hyphen* that may cater to Asian-American women...but I have yet to see either of those on a newsstand in my area. As my local newsstands continue to bulge to overflowing with the latest UK imports, artsy mags from New York and the Bay Area in California, and hobby magazines, I wonder how Asian-American women are consistently passed over. The only place I consistently see Asian-American faces is *Lucky* - and I think that is the influence of one of the editors.]

The mag industry also underestimates the number of cross-cultural friendships. How many times have I bonded with my friends over how much advertisers do not appreciate our money? Sitting with my friend Hae, we both marveled at a hair care feature which painstakingly detailed options for brunettes, blonds, and redheads with thick hair, thin hair, wavy hair, curly hair...and then saved a small column for "ethnic" hair.

Hae and I were mystified. I can no longer remember the name of the magazine that ran the article, but apparently, all types of ethnic hair can be fixed with a defrizzer. Since there was an Asian girl in the accompanying photo, we decided to believe that advice might have been for Asian hair. Or maybe not. The next beauty feature we read also labeled out options for pale skins and self-tanners, giving another column to what was deemed "dark/African-American skin."

Not too long after that, Hae gave up American magazines all together, preferring Korean mags like *Ceci* and Korean blogs.

I still had the occasional magazine to fall back on. There was *Honey*, there was *Suede*, and finally *Vixen*.

Vixen excited me the most. *Essence* is the reigning magazine for African-American women, but it leaves a lot to be desired. A lot of *Essence's* articles are tailored toward older, more family oriented women, and about their truths and achievements. What I looked for in a magazine was something that spoke to me, a neo-bohemian from the new school, raised on hip-hop and the internet with a healthy mix of rock, jazz and culture thrown in to keep things interesting.

Vibe Vixen was the magazine that spoke directly to me, my own affirmation that there are more of the young, rebellious, and fabulous. Finally, someone heard my silent pleas and created a magazine that was reflective of me.

And now, that voice is no more. The bi-monthly mag has folded, to be reassigned as a cultural quarterly.

For the third time, the small voice that represented my interests has been silenced.

In the article, "A Hip-Hop State of Mind," *Vibe Vixen* introduces the piece by summarizing their magazine:

"As the only magazine that fully represents the voice of a generation of women raised in and on hip-hop..."

Vibe Vixen was on its way to achieving that goal of being the voice of this particular segment of young women. I would have hoped it would pave the way for other voices - alternative Latinas, black women who are not defined by hip-hop, a 'zine that respectfully explores differences between men and women without pitting one side against the other.

sigh

But silenced voices can no longer speak.

So, *Vibe Vixen* ends.

And young black women are once again waiting for a magazine that will speak to them, instead of the current cacophony of voices that try to speak for us without knowing who we are at all.