

## Singer death column sparks Twitter rage

October 19 2009, By JILL LAWLESS , Associated Press Writer

---



Members of Irish band Boyzone, Ronan Keating, foreground left, Mikey Graham foreground right, Keith Duffy, background left, partially seen, and Shane Lynch background right, carry the coffin of fellow band member Stephen Gately from St. Laurence O'Toole Church, after the funeral service, in Dublin, Ireland, Saturday Oct. 17, 2009. Gately was found dead on Saturday, Oct. 10, 2009, in a house near Port d'Andratx on the western tip of Mallorca. The singer had gone to Mallorca with his partner Andrew Cowles. The two were wed in a civil union in 2006. Autopsy results released on Tuesday showed Gately died of natural causes. (AP Photo/Niall Carson/PA)

(AP) -- Britain's press watchdog said Monday it had received a record 21,000 complaints about a newspaper column on the death of Boyzone singer Stephen Gately after critics used Twitter to brand the article homophobic and insensitive.

Gately died Oct. 10, aged 33, while vacationing on the Spanish island of Mallorca. An autopsy found he had died of natural causes from pulmonary edema, or fluid in the lungs.

Daily Mail columnist Jan Moir wrote in a column Friday that Gately's death was "not, by any yardstick, a natural one" and said he died in "sleazy" circumstances. She noted that Gately, who came out publicly as gay in 1999, had been to a bar and invited a young Bulgarian man back to his apartment the night before he died.

Moir concluded that "under the carapace of glittering, hedonistic celebrity, the ooze of a very different and more dangerous lifestyle has seeped out for all to see."

Anger at the column swept social networking site Twitter soon after Moir's piece appeared on the paper's Web site. Actor Stephen Fry urged his 860,000 Twitter followers to contact the Press Complaints Commission. Other prominent Tweeters followed suit, and provided links to the commission's Web site.

Advertisers including retail chain Marks and Spencer asked to have their ads removed from the Mail Web page carrying Moir's column.

In a blog post Monday, Fry called Moir's column an "epically ill-judged piece of gutter journalism."

Moir defended her article, claiming suggestions of homophobia were "mischievous" and suggesting the backlash was a "heavily orchestrated Internet campaign."

The commission said Monday it had received "by far the highest number of complaints ever" about a single article. It said it would write to the newspaper seeking a response before deciding whether to take further

action.

Irish boy band Boyzone sold millions of albums in the 1990s and had six British No. 1 singles, including "All That I Need" and a cover of the Bee Gees' "Words."

Under the British media's self-regulatory system, newspapers are bound to adhere to the commission's code of practice, which includes commitments to accuracy, respect for privacy and avoiding "pejorative reference" to an individual's race, color, religion or disability.

*©2009 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.*

Citation: Singer death column sparks Twitter rage (2009, October 19) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-10-singer-death-column-twitter-rage.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.