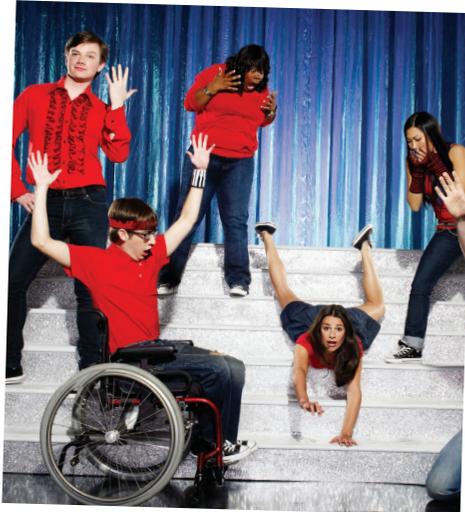




Hitting the



right note



*It's not just for showbiz junkies – give in and succumb to Glee fever*

WORDS | YI-HWA B HANNA

It makes you laugh, cry and cringe, and inspires an uncontrollable urge to burst into song; it can be none other than *Glee*, the hit musical dramedy series about a bunch of high school misfits who find themselves and each other through a mutual love of show choir. You'd never guess that this fabulously frothy, happy show was the brainchild of the creative forces behind the dark and somewhat twisted *Nip/Tuck*, but they certainly know the recipe for TV success. *Glee*'s boasted 9.77 million viewers in its first season, rising to 10.12 million for its second.

So how did a story about a bunch of singing, dancing nerds end up becoming one of the most popular shows in the world? It's simple, really: the underlying theme is the importance of being true to yourself no matter what others think – told with a wicked sense of humour and a bit of whimsy.

Since the first season aired in 2009, *Glee* has become a publicist's dream – with oodles of merchandise to show for it. Off-screen, fans can pick up the book series, an iPad app and a Wii karaoke game.

The music's probably the most important part. Songs covered in the show are released through the iTunes Store during the week of broadcast and stars CeeLo Green and Travie McCoy have been thrilled to have their music covered, with McCoy saying, "It's such an important part of pop culture right now." Pop legend Elton John agrees, saying, "This is a compliment, also it sends a positive message out." It's great exposure, too – as *Glee* covers skyrocket to the top of the charts, the original version usually does alongside it. Celebrities such as Zac Efron, Julie Andrews, Snoop Dogg and

Jennifer Lopez have all also reportedly expressed their interest in a coveted guest starring role on the show.

And fans – who have named themselves "Gleeks" – have plenty to keep them busy as the latest season approaches. The *Glee Project*, a reality series providing fans the chance to win a guest role on the show, began airing on The Oxygen Channel in June this year. An incredible response to the *Glee Live! Tour 2010*, a concert tour performed by cast members in character, saw the summer 2011 edition of the tour expand beyond the USA to reach the UK and Ireland. The London leg of the tour broke records for the most-attended concert in the O2 Arena's history, with 66,000 fans attending four concerts over two days. Such levels of success for a concert based on a TV show are hardly surprising considering that many of the actors boast a wealth of Broadway experience and serious talent.

"People like the show because it keeps their spirits up," says Heather Morris, better known to Gleeks as her character Brittany Pierce. "A lot of people tell me that they come home and *Glee* is the thing that keeps them going. We don't have a lot of positive TV shows anymore." If *glee* can be defined as exultant joy, the show couldn't inspire that feeling more clearly. "There's something everyone can relate to, whether it's a character or a situation; it's the music – it just has this magical way of connecting everybody; and it promotes emotion," says Chris Colfer, who plays character Kurt Hummel.

The show has become a phenomenon that can't be ignored, and if you haven't yet jumped on the bandwagon, it's time you did – we can almost guarantee it'll give you something to sing about.