# How Liver King and fitness influencers reshape masculinity through extremes



The emergence of fitness influencers has transformed contemporary notions of masculinity, often glorifying extreme behaviours and harsh self-discipline as ideals of manhood. A notable example in this narrative is Brian Johnson, widely known as the Liver King, whose controversial practices have prompted broader discussions about health, authenticity, and the implications of so-called "performative masculinity."

Johnson's journey serves as a prism through which we can examine the extreme end of the fitness spectrum. At first, he built a significant online presence by promoting an “ancestral lifestyle” that emphasised raw organ consumption and rigorous workouts, all while espousing ideals of radical self-control. However, his recent admission of steroid use reveals a troubling disconnect between his public persona and personal reality. Though the Netflix documentary, *Untold: The Liver King*, details his rapid rise and resultant fall, critiques indicate it offers an excessively sympathetic portrayal, failing to robustly interrogate the potential harm inflicted on followers susceptible to his misleading guidance.

The underlying phenomenon illustrated by Johnson is reflective of a broader social media culture that rewards hypermasculinity. Analysis of platforms like Instagram and TikTok shows a substantial shift towards content framing extreme physical effort—and accompanying pain—as measures of masculinity. Influencers increasingly present their personal sacrifices, such as rigorous training regimens or extreme diets, as not just commendable but morally virtuous. They often attach militaristic rhetoric to their narratives, urging other men to approach fitness as a battleground—promoting concepts of resilience and discipline that can devolve into harmful practices.

As indicated by Strava’s recent report, younger generations are gravitating towards athleticism as a means of personal performance rather than for health benefits. Many Gen Z athletes demonstrate an inclination to push their physical boundaries, as seen in the growing popularity of ultramarathons and extreme endurance activities. This shift further emphasises a culture in which suffering is celebrated as an indicator of commitment and seriousness. The case of Nedd Brockmann, who undertook a grueling run across Australia to raise funds for charity, exemplifies this trend of using pain as a badge of honour.

Inevitably, the content that circulates and garners widespread recognition on social media triggers algorithms designed to amplify intense and emotionally charged posts. This mechanism results in a troubling cycle where influencers, seeking to thrive on these platforms, engage in increasingly extreme behaviours for views and monetisation opportunities. The imperatives of self-marketing lead not just to physical consequences, such as injury or hormone disruption, but also embody a broader ideological challenge. Young men are presented with a narrow definition of masculinity that equates worth with suffering, misplacing their understanding of manhood.

This presents a critical public health issue. As social media amplifies these messages of hypermasculinity, the need for alternative narratives becomes increasingly crucial. Rather than seeking to censor extreme fitness content, public health platforms and community programmes must strive to present healthier representations of ambition and masculinity. Initiatives like Tomorrow Man aim to foster spaces for building community and encouraging dialogue among young men, offering them healthier models to aspire to.

Without these counter-narratives, the spectre of self-inflicted hardship will remain the primary reference point for many young men. The challenge moving forward resides not in eliminating these extreme fitness influences but in reframing the conversation around masculinity, encouraging broader definitions of what it means to be strong, resilient, and ultimately, healthy.

### Reference Map

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2. Paragraph 2: 1, 2, 3
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Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://theconversation.com/from-the-liver-king-to-ultramarathons-fitness-influencers-are-glorifying-extreme-masculinity-where-pain-is-the-point-256817> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://time.com/7284988/untold-the-liver-king-true-story-netflix/> - This article reviews the Netflix documentary 'Untold: The Liver King,' which chronicles the rise and fall of Brian Johnson, known as the Liver King. The documentary portrays Johnson's journey from promoting an 'ancestral lifestyle' to admitting steroid use, highlighting the dangers of influencer culture and health misinformation. The film is critiqued for offering a sympathetic portrayal without critically interrogating Johnson's actions or the potential harm to his audience.
3. <https://www.businessinsider.com/liver-king-regrets-using-steroids-after-being-sued-25-million-2023-5> - This article discusses Brian Johnson, the Liver King, who built a massive following by promoting a raw meat diet and intense workouts. After admitting to steroid use, Johnson expressed regret over misleading his followers. The article also covers the $25 million lawsuit filed against him, alleging deceptive marketing practices and promoting a dangerous diet.
4. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-12-08/tiktok-fitness-influencer-liver-king-exposed-using-steroids/101742792> - This article reports on Brian Johnson, known as the Liver King, who gained fame by claiming a diet of raw animal organs helped him build muscle. He admitted to using steroids after being exposed, revealing he was spending about $11,000 a month on performance-enhancing drugs. The article includes his apology and the public's reaction to the revelation.
5. <https://www.tmz.com/2022/12/02/ancestral-lifestyle-influencer-liver-king-admits-steroid-use/> - This article covers Brian Johnson, the Liver King, admitting to steroid use after previously denying it. In a video, he apologized for misleading his followers and explained his actions, stating he was monitored by a trained hormone clinician. The article also touches on his rise to fame and the public's reaction to his confession.
6. <https://www.dexerto.com/entertainment/liver-king-confirms-steroid-use-in-apology-video-i-lied-2001176/> - This article reports on Brian Johnson, the Liver King, confirming his steroid use in an apology video. After months of denial, he admitted to using steroids and expressed regret for misleading his audience. The article provides details of his confession and the context surrounding the revelation.
7. <https://www.businessinsider.com/influencer-the-liver-king-raw-diet-admits-steroid-use-2022-12> - This article discusses Brian Johnson, the Liver King, who admitted to using steroids after previously claiming his physique was achieved through a raw meat diet and intense workouts. The article details his confession, the leaked emails revealing his steroid use, and the public's reaction to the revelation.