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[Everyone's a Critic - For Better or For Worse](#)

Posted on February 2, 2011 by [Sharon Armstrong](#)

P.T. Barnum is credited as having said [that there is no such thing as bad publicity](#). In modern times, technology has made it so that we, the huddling masses, can have not only access to good and bad publicity with a keystroke, but also join the crowds leveling criticism or praise at anything in our path. Like the restaurant down the block? Tell your neighbor. Hate the restaurant down the block? Leave a scathing review for the whole world to read on [Yelp](#).

Indeed, in this day, it seems that [everyone is a critic](#). On one hand, the democratization of criticism (or bad publicity) seems to be a [fundamentally American sort of thing](#). I like to have my opinions just like everyone else, and [I know junk when I see it](#) on a screen, eat it in a restaurant, or read it in a book. But what does one do when the gauntlet of social media, which is the publicity equivalent of a [shot heard around the world](#), sends not just a criticism, but an objectively unfair criticism, downstream?

One local restaurant, [Bar La Grassa](#), has had to deal with such a problem. (Full disclosure: I am a regular-enough patron of Bar La Grassa and the only reason I would tell you not to dine there would be to leave more soft-eggs-and-lobster-bruschetta for me.) Hat tip to my friend Amanda for sending me to this [article](#) on the *Star Tribune* website, which details how a simple request for a dinner reservation by an anonymous celebrity turned into a Twitter-storm of nastiness, with allegations of “rude[-ness]” and “mean[-ness]” lobbed at the restaurant manager for not accommodating the reservation-seeker at the expense of existing reservations. Rather than harming Bar La Grassa’s reputation, however, the whole controversy seems to have had the opposite effect, as evidenced by the comments section, in which it appears that a good (at the time of this writing) 80 people who’ve not yet dined at Bar La Grassa will now be seeking a reservation there.

So, branding professionals, what are some other examples of bad publicity becoming better business? And what about this situation makes more Minneapolis-ites want to visit Bar La Grassa?

[Note: [Idea Peepshow](#) had a comprehensive post on the situation.]

