

Effect of social media on how society views the celebrity



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Throughout this essay I will show how the “ Total star text” of Richard Dyer can be used on different types of stars/celebrities such as Michael Jackson and Elvis’s ability to have different eras where they changed their look to keep up with the times. I will touch on aspects of how social media has impacted how we look at stars and how much influence we have on the rise and fall of them. Not only will I talk about Dyer but I’ll add in examples of other theorists that critique him such as John B Thompson and add in other different types of concepts by Stuart Hall and Boorstin.

As we are growing up, we hold Pop Stars in the same regard as athletes and superheroes. We look up to them because of their persona, their art and their whole image as a package of “ greatness”. No average person can fill up a 20 000 arena 5 nights in a row, not even many musicians can. But people can flock into a 80 000 seat football stadium to see their favorite hero play. It is only the top tier, the elite level stars. The pop stars that make the impossible possible and the ones through their music make you believe, provoking a feeling you can’t put into words, a feeling you can’t sing in a song. But how many of these stars are “ legit”? How many of the ones we look up to are a manufactured image of what the record label wants them to be, in other words – how many of them are genuine?

“ A film star’s image is not just his or hers films, but the promotion of those films, and of the star through pin-ups and public appearances, studio handouts and so on, as well as interviews, biographies and coverage in the press of the star’s doing and “ private life” (Richard Dyer, Heavenly bodies: 3).

In order for someone to have a mass following they have to have certain tropes. Especially in today's society with the impact of social media, celebrity culture can be more than just having "talent". In other words, you can have a mass following by not being good at anything, just looks. And we have to understand that the "male gaze" has allowed certain personalities to prosper and make a career of themselves because of their attractiveness and then having the right people behind to provide longevity by creating million dollar businesses to keep that fame going (e. g The Kardashain Klan). But in order to be at the very top tier of a star and we will see in example that I will bring up later and throughout this essay. Some stars have 2 or more characteristics that make the masses want them. They have the full package - the entire entertainment package. That is Richard Dyer's total star text, the combination of sounds, words and images that make up the public persona of any celebrity.

".. not only do different elements predominate in different star images, but they also do so differently at different periods in star's careers. Star images have histories and histories that outlive the star's own lifetime." (Dyer, Heavenly Bodies: 3). There's not many stars that have different eras. Michael Jackson for example had a few of them, where he was at different stages in his life and you could see that in his music and the way he acted. There is a big debate of which of those eras was his career at his highest and music at its peak and I can say the big comparisons is between the Bad era and the Thriller era. Because in the Thriller era. He had his highest selling album, won 8 Grammy's, he had made his best short films (Billie Jean, Beat It and Thriller during this time and performed the first Moonwalk live. During the

Bad era he had already established himself as one of the biggest acts in the world and probably we had ever seen at the time. But Bad cemented his claim as the real King of Pop but on top of all that and the unprecedented reaction for Thriller, he still managed to put out another quality of the album with hits such as Bad, You Make Me Feel, Man In The Mirror and Smooth Criminal. Another artist that had quite a few different eras is none other than Elvis. Not only the music, but his fashion sense and style puts him up there with Michael Jackson as one of the greatest style icons we've seen cross the face of the earth. In the early parts of his career (1950s) his style was very clean cut. Loafers, nice trousers which were often high-waisted and collared shirts. In the 60s, he took it up a notch with tailored suits and the hair was slicked and gelled back. These iconic looks were not only stylish back then, but in today too. In the 70s Elvis then started to wear jumpsuits as styles were changing and also had those iconic side burns.

Richard Dyer though states that stars are not real and genuine but rather manufactured of different concepts like branding to make them look like a real and authentic people. The music industry and media use tools such as advertising and styling and tabloid pieces. Out of all those tools, certain things will stick as in stars will start to be associated with different concepts whether its Prince with the color purple or Jimmy Hendrix with those amazing jerry curls or Michael Jackson with the fashion. This leads to the commodification of stars. Record labels or media companies finding a way to make money of things that symbolize specific artists. "... stars are models of consumption.. their fashions are to be copied, fads followed, sports pursued, and hobbies taken up"(Dyer: 1986). X Factor is a prime example of how the

construction of a star works. When they come in to audition in the beginning of the season, they just ordinary people who want to make it and throughout the season they get trained all sorts of skills in order to make them the star that is going to make it in whatever industry they pursue.

It is part of a marketing plan that the way artists live their lives whether it is by causing shock waves by saying controversial things or always being on the front pages, it is the way they live their lives that allows them to be put in certain boxes in society. Before Kanye West dropped his latest self-titled album *Ye*. He had a bit of a promo run where he came back on Twitter and he had come out publicly and spoke about his mental health issues and how he was trying to fix all the broken relationships he had cause over the course of his career including that of Beyonce and Jay-Z and he also had come out with his misinterpreted “ Slavery was a choice” comments. Many could have seen this that this was all to promote his album and that it was all part of a marketing strategy to bring attention back to him. He has broken many barriers but he is also a perfect example of how it is possible to monetize a certain star.

When a certain star is “ typed” this make it then easy for many others to try and mimic this type of style as it is seen to be successful. The boy band type is the most straightforward example of this. A boy band is a mixture of everything and has quite a bit of longevity as we have seen with the latest examples such as One Direction. The innocent look of boy bands allows the biggest target market (teenagers) to be obsessed with them. They will buy all the merchandise, they will buy and stream all the music and they will most definitely be going to all the concerts. This allows for endorsements to <https://assignbuster.com/effect-of-social-media-on-how-society-views-the-celebrity/>

come knocking on the door as they see the influence and how much money can be made if marketed right. This is why all boy bands look exactly identical. Lastly, according to Richard Dyer, “ stars articulate...historical specificities of class, gender, race, sexuality, subcultural formations, etc.”, (Dyer, 1998). Hence, stars embody prevalent preconceptions of cultural and historical ideology.

The urge of wanting to live like stars and being like stars boil down to the media construction of how they live their lives. The reason to why we can kind of relate to them is because they started off as normal people and through entertainment they have turned their life around into a dream worth living, But most of the time we see the constructed image. “ We love them because they represent how we think that experience is or how it would be lovely to feel that it is. Stars represent typical ways of behaving, feeling and thinking in contemporary society, ways that have been socially, culturally, historically constructed (Dyer: 17).

Even though Dyer speaks about Marilyn Monroe and her impact on how people looked at sexuality and morality. Earlier I touched on how a star is “ typed” you will always get other who will try and copy those steps in order to commoditize it. Another version of that is Kim Kardashian,. Believe it out not, whether you agree with her ways or not she has played a big role in today’s society in women embracing their sexuality. When her sextape got released her family had done a great job (whether it was morally correct or not) in marketing her around her and her sisters embracing their sexuality. The Kardashians have built a multi million dollar empire in them being all involved in some way in different entities. Now Kim Kardashian is finally <https://assignbuster.com/effect-of-social-media-on-how-society-views-the-celebrity/>

using her platform to do good in the way she has been tackling prison reforms.

Stars resonate with normal people as in Beyonce's music might resonate with strong independent women and women who aspire to be strong as her songs and performances are about how to "boss up" and that as a woman you don't need anyone to take care of you as you can take care of yourself.

Other theorists such as John B Thompson believe we can't just understand the concept of stars through reading certain internal pieces. And we have to search for reasons on the exterior of the stars and what they produce to explore their processes that are involved in their consumption. Thompson's we might start to figure out what we do with celebrities and not what celebrities do with us.

Celebrity culture could also be a creation of media company and like I mention with Kanye earlier, a pseudo-event. Whereby events are made but there is no substance to these events, nothing but to bring certain media attention. This is very visible in tabloid paper as, a certain model or a singer on the beach opens up discussion of how good or bad her body looks and even though this could completely not news worthy, papers still put it out because it is what people want to see and it also provides a click-bait. "We live in and through banal media representations – the celebrity is the epitome of the human pseudo event" since celebrities are "fabricated on purpose to satisfy our exaggerated expectations of human greatness" (Boorstin: 1992, 42). He insists that propaganda and pseudo event are the complete opposite even though both is to con the public. Propaganda gives

you alternative facts to hide the truth as pseudo events gives you fake situations that have happened to try and prove to us that they(celebrities) real just like us. Pseudo events have a lot of planning that go into it, nothing that happens here is by coincidence because by planning it, it allows you to get the most media coverage. Celebrities have contributed to neoliberalism because of its nature to have nice things. Our favorite celebrities influence us to go spend money because we want to dress like them, and live a similar lifestyle because its all a fantasy we want to make real so bad not taking into account how much harm it is actually causing.

Longevity in the entertainment industry is very hard, especially if you start you career while you very young as the rise and fall of celebrities is evitable and the chances of that happening quicker has been the importance of how impactful social media has become in our lives because with all celebrities, we envious of them – it’s a love hate relationship as some of us would love to be in their situation living the high life and in the same breath some people want that all taken away from them as then they can be normal people just like us and you can see that in comments such as “ I don’t know why she’s famous, she’s not even talented.- “.. a systematic cycle of celebration, consecration and sacrifice” (Payne, 2010: 51)

We have the power to love our celebrities, for example buy their products, listen to their music and contribute to their and our wellbeing by consuming them but we have also the power to destroy them. Catching you’re your favorite star on a bad day and asking for a picture could see them “ acting out of character” to what you used to this is because people react differently when other people invade their space. If a interaction like this is caught on <https://assignbuster.com/effect-of-social-media-on-how-society-views-the-celebrity/>

tape it could possibly result in some people disassociating themselves with that particular person because they have never seen them in that kind of way. Another common and twisted way to bring down celebrities is by old tweets which social media gives us the opportunity to do. If old tweets are pulled up from 10 years ago of a certain celebrity making homophobic or racist remarks that can cause them to lose a few endorsements as that would be bad for the brand. This shows that the audience have so much power on these stars lives and not everything is in the hands of the media and the industry. The audience also play an important role because they decide whether they going to buy that product or not.

“ The narratives of ‘ making it’ and ‘ losing it’ can be entirely complementary rather than contradictory, imbricated with one another and in a cynical process of rising and falling, like the operation of the mythical ‘ wheel of fate”. (Cross and Littler, 414). The rise and fall of celebrity either means two thing, 1) that particular star is gone from the scene and they go into hiding as they have nothing more to offer on a commercial level or 2) that particular stars going into hiding and re-brands then resurrects themselves and makes a come back and this can be done in a number of ways.

Throughout this essay I have given examples of how the “ Total star text” of Richard Dyer can be used on different types of stars/celebrities. Also on how much influence we have on the rise and fall of them. It’s important that I used other critical perspectives in some that critique Dyer to give a different direction and narrative to understand the celebrities.

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