Celebrity juice, not from concentrate: Perez Hilton, gossip blogs, and the new star production

by Anne Petersen

In early May, 2006, Tom Cruise grinned wildly at the reader from the cover of *Entertainment Weekly*. Only instead of promoting *Mission Impossible 3*, the magazine paired Cruise’s million-dollar smile with a questioning caption: “Is Tom Cruise Really Worth $100,000,000?” (IMAGE 1) For a star whose box office track record has established him as one of the few remaining sure-fires in an industry with increasing resemblance to a Las Vegas craps table, the gravity of such a headline is immense. Since Cruise is arguably the most iconic actor of the last twenty years, considerable damage must have been done to his star persona in order for a national magazine to question Cruise’s drawing power as a cinematic colossus.

Many will argue that Cruise clearly damaged himself with a year of Scientology blather, couch-jumping, public condemnation of psychiatry, and micro-management of fiancée Katie Homes, and they are correct: Cruise’s actions over the previous twelve months seemed a clear departure from his once immensely private personal life. (IMAGES 2 AND 3) But what truly brought Cruise’s actions into the limelight, what scrutinized them, parodied them, and facilitated their massive proliferation, is an institution even older than Hollywood: celebrity gossip. *Us Weekly*, *People*, *Entertainment Tonight* ran stories, of course. However, even more significant in its effect on deteriorating Cruise’s image, is the Internet gossip blog. With easy accessibility and immediacy, gossip blogs have set up shop inside the massive mechanism of the Hollywood star system. By combining snarky commentary with links to the actual video clips of and recollections about Cruise’s recent television appearances, gossip bloggers have been credited with causing Cruise’s star to begin its fall, his movie to perform below expectations, and *Entertainment Weekly* to question his worth on the marquee. Finally, as reported in an August 22nd article in *Wall Street Journal*, Paramount CEO Sumner Redstone publicly severed the studio’s ties with Cruise, explaining, “His recent conduct has not been acceptable to Paramount” ([cnmoney.com](http://cnmoney.com)). [open works cited in new window](http://cnmoney.com) As evidenced by Cruise’s case, a blogger may significantly use posts to influence box office pulls and dent, inflate, and damage a star image.

The most notorious of these bloggers is Perez Hilton (real name Mario Lavandeira) whose blog currently boasts more than a million hits a day. (IMAGE 4) Along with fellow gossip bloggers at *The Defamer*, *Lainey Gossip*, *The Superficial*, *Jossip*, and *Pink Is the New Blog*, Perez and his blog function as the newest component of the Hollywood star machine, integrating the established mechanism of gossip with the new, immediate accessibility of the Internet. Examining past and present posts, I situate Hilton and his blog within Richard Dyer’s landmark analysis stars, here focusing on the blogger’s novel role in star “production.” As Paul McDonald recently noted in *The Star System*, much of the work on stars in the last two decades has focused on stars as a “phenomenon of consumption,” rather than production, effectively “losing sight of where stars come from” (2). In this paper, I aim to “partly redress the imbalance” that McDonald observes in past scholarship. While McDonald primarily concerns himself with star production by studios, this paper examines how the blogger occupies a unique position in the “industry,” functioning as both producer and consumer of the star image.

This paper also focuses specifically on Hilton because his blog is the most read, most publicized and most thoroughly pervaded by the blogger’s own personality. (IMAGE 5) As such, it exemplifies the union of traditional gossip columnists and new media technologies. But even more interestingly, Hilton, as a openly gay “queen” with an unabashed affection for all things camp, complicates these phenomena of star production and consumption. Whether by comparing an unflattering photo of a celebrity to a celebrated drag queen or launching incessant campaigns to “out” a star, Hilton’s position in the queer community needs to be figured in any analysis of his influence. Most of this paper concerns itself with tracing the gossip blogger in relation to five key aspects of star production — economics, manipulation, fashion, magic/talent, and the nature of the medium — but also explores how each element of production is (or is not) influenced by Hilton’s status as a gay man. I go on to assert that the gossip blogger’s use of new media is, in fact, a stripping of mechanisms mediated directly by Hollywood. As new media technology makes New Hollywood’s mechanisms visible, gossip bloggers utilize this visibility to influence consumption. Bloggers illuminate the star system, and in so doing, alter our expectations and understanding of stars and their importance in society today.

One of Dyer’s major assertions focuses on the fact that society, as opposed to any film’s success or failure, truly makes or breaks a star. How we “feel” about stars — whether they seem likable, admirable, down-to-earth, worthy of devotion, glamorous, etc. — determines whether or not we attend their movies. With this in mind, as Internet gossip continues to proliferate, we need to evaluate how it may influence, much more than printed media, our perception and subsequent consumption of stars. Internet gossip sites differ from the gossip columns of Classic Hollywood. In particular, blogs represent a recent yet significant component of new media, a term loosely defined as the current cultural shift resulting from the ubiquity of and reliance on computers, digitalization, and the Internet.

Blogs first garnered major media attention when they provided a means of rapid-fire discourse surrounding the 2004 Presidential
Hollywood gossip blogs — PerezHilton.com in particular — follow the same general format. A picture is posted; the picture is accompanied by a comment, story, or a link to a more detailed article. The picture itself is the focal point of the post, but the text influences the manner in which the picture is received. The text and photo, received in tandem by the reader, then become part of a celebrity’s “image.” I use the word not in its traditional sense — as a visual representation of a thing — but in Dyer’s conception of the image:

“a complex configuration of visual, verbal, and aural signs....it is manifest not only in films but in all kinds of media texts” (35).

Bloggers, concentrating not only the image itself, but also on the means of its production, have begun to alter the way that stars are “consumed” by the public. Granted, the public has long been knowledgeable of the strings of production — Joan Crawford’s persona and name were chosen through a Photoplay contest; Rita Hayworth’s cosmetic transformation was highly publicized, to name just a few — yet those strings were meant to be seen. Like any other part of a star’s public image, they were constructed and willfully disseminated by the studio. Yet bloggers, even more than the gossip columnists who came before them, have broken through those walls of production, effectively exposing the “phenomena” of production. The remainder of this paper explores these methods of “exposure,” utilizing five of Dyer’s categories of production as its loose structure.

Economics

Stars are essential to Hollywood: more than any other cinematic variable, they often predict or ensure the success of a film. And yet, as Dyer explains,

“....even in Hollywood’s heyday, stars did not absolutely guarantee the success of a film. Stars move in and out of favour, and even at the height of their popularity, they were not able to make a film that nobody much goes to see....for this reason stars were a very problematic necessity from an economic point of view” (11).

In other words, stars represent the ultimate in Hollywood paradoxes: a studio needs them, but they cannot “insure” actors’ success with good roles or promising parts. The studio must rely on the actors’ specific appeal in a specific societal moment. As society is historically as moody as a 13-year-old girl, this makes for mercurial rises and falls. For most of the 20th century, the task of recording (and influencing) a particular star’s fortunes (and appraised economic value) fell to print media, specifically the form of the gossip column.

Celebrity gossip is as old as Hollywood itself. For decades Louella Parsons, Hedda Hopper, and dozens of others served to arbitrate and disseminate all the star “news” that was fit to print. But with newspapers and magazines, the reader had to wait for a weekly update on the dynamic star lifestyle. With television, this delay was ameliorated with the introduction of celebrity “news,” especially Entertainment Tonight and E!, a network devoted exclusively to celebrity culture and entertainment. The majority of E!’s programming schedule is filled with repeat broadcasts of “True Hollywood Story,” “50 Biggest Fashion Mistakes,” and similar productions. While these shows undoubtedly contribute to a star’s image and subsequent economic value, once produced, the filmed shows remain static — unable to match their content to that of the ever-fluctuating star image. E!’s daily gossip show, Talk Soup, does provide dynamic, up-to-date accounts of star society. But the show provides more of a forum for other gossip guests, and is not a gossip-getter itself. “Talking gossip heads,” including Perez and other gossip bloggers, now regularly appear on Talk Soup to dish out gossip on specific stars or subjects. (IMAGE 6) In addition, since the show has a one-time broadcast, it requires the viewer to be present at a certain time, in a fixed location, to get the up-to-date “news.”

In contrast, the Internet, with the mobilization enabled by wireless technology and PDA devices, is accessible at all times, in nearly all places. Because Perez Hilton posts continuously throughout the day, a consumer can check in several times, charting the progress of a celebrity event. In addition, the sheer volume of posts allows for a more minute examination of rises and falls. In this way, Hilton’s blog proves reflexive: it serves not only as a detector of public disfavor, but a catalyst for it as well. Picking up pieces of gossip from a variety of sources, Hilton disseminates this “news” to an audience of millions, thus amplifying public awareness. Even if a star were not previously in public disfavor, the fact that Perez reports that she is effectively morphs rumor into reality, working to bolster or break the economic value of a star.

Hilton’s treatment of “TomKat” (gossip’s moniker for Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes) exemplifies this relation between blogging and a star’s economic value. In a post from June 1st, 2005, just weeks after the first public appearance of the couple in Rome, Hilton highlights a suggestive gossip bit. Quoting the National Inquirer’s story of Cruise’s giving Holmes a “high-tech GPS phone” that could “track her whereabouts, minute by minute,” Hilton follows with his own commentary:

“That story is just so ridiculously sublime, who cares if it’s true!”

Here, Hilton’s afterthought is significant — while he acknowledges that the gossip may be far-fetched, his perpetuation of such a story subtly influences the reader to believe that regardless of its veracity, such behavior may be believably attributed to the stars in question. Put differently, even a story acknowledged as fake may influence a star’s image, simply by associating that star with a certain type of behavior. Such stories also set a precedent. From June 1st on, Hilton posted dozens of quips concerning Cruise’s purported micro-management and “control-freak” antics with fiancée Holmes. Each story made the next more believable, leading to Perez Hilton’s current campaign. They showed an ability to swiftly post material, engage in debate, and garner a readership at once loyal and diverse. Here was a new way of stimulating discourse, a novel means of disseminating opinion, a 21st century method of reaching a technology-dependent audience. Less publicized that political blogs, the gossip blog serves a similar, if less dignified, function. Granted, its topics may include sexual preference speculation, cheap jabs at unphotogenic celebrities, and outright smear campaigns, but the import of the gossip blog is still considerable.
speculation that Holmes was paid by Cruise to bear his child in synchronization with the premiere of Mission Impossible III (IMAGES 8 and 9).

Once again, it matters little whether or not Cruise actually paid Holmes. What matters is that the item was so heavily circulated by Hilton and other bloggers that it has appreciably deteriorated Cruise’s star persona.[1] Granted, print gossip was publishing the same bits of gossip, but pressure from advertisers and libel laws generally hold print media more responsible for factfulness. What’s more, the frequency with which Hilton blogged these bits substantially intensified their effect and influence. As discussed later, blogs have a categorization function that allows the reader to click on a link, here labeled “TomKat,” and read the blogger’s critical posts in succession, in this case, further intensifying negative sentiment against and suspicion of Cruise.

MI-iii opened with a disappointing $48 million domestic box office—a stellar number for most films, but well below the opening weekends of both MI-II and War of the Worlds, a statistic that lead CBS News Online “blogophile” Melissa McNamara to entitle her May 10th entry, “Did Bloggers Doom ‘MI-iii’?”. McNamara cites Hilton’s call for a boycott of the film as a potential explanation for its underwhelming performance, quoting her May 5th post proclaiming,

“If you believe that good should triumph over evil...if you believe in the power of the people, democracy, free speech, and popping pills....Then join the campaign!”

Clearly a blogger with Hilton’s readership may potentially alter public perception of a star. With the release of MI-iii, evidence leads us to believe that he may likewise possess the power, even more than print gossip, to influence the economic value of a star.

Perez’ ability to affect a star economically thus established, the question remains: why would he choose to do so? Perez effectively launched a campaign against Cruise and his movie, but to suggest he did so arbitrarily is to neglect one of the juiciest rumors in Hollywood: namely, that Cruise is an intensely closeted homosexual. This paper will go on to discuss the manners in which Perez promotes/demotes a star based on their skill of producing a star image. In particular, for Perez, one practice particularly signals what he considers studios’ and actors’ inattention to the current attitude of star consumers: that is, a star’s refusal to come out of the closet. For Perez, refusal to admit to homosexuality reinforces what he views as the “myth” of gayness as box office poison. He considers stars who view homosexuality as a potentially negative component to their star image as woefully ignorant of burgeoning societal acceptance of gayness on all fronts.[2] Furthermore, and perhaps even more economically importantly, such thinking neglects the homosexual community as star consumers. Many homosexuals, especially self-identifying queens such as Perez, have embraced the “fabulousness” of Hollywood glamour as part of their subculture. As homosexuals statistically often have relatively large sums of expendable income[3], Hollywood marketing should acknowledge and appreciate them as a significant segment of star consumers. In other words, for Perez, neglecting or insulting such a key segment of the consuming public constitutes poor star-image-production values, and merits exposure and ridicule through his blog.

Fagalicious: Perez and outing

Perez self-identifies as an “outing” homosexual. While the first waves of massive “outing” occurred as a result of massive deaths by AIDS in the 1990s, many homosexuals, following the lead of Michael Musto and Michaelangelo Signorile, came to regard “outing” as a moral obligation to the gay community. As Richard Mohr explains in Gay Ideas,

“to accept the closet is to have absorbed society’s view of gays, to accept insult so that one avoids harm” (31).

Such a stance and practice Perez wholeheartedly espouses; it is one for which he has been both heavily criticized and praised.[4] As Mohr explains,

“to break such a community-defining convention is to appear to be a traitor to the community. But what appears as treason to some can actually be social reform, as exemplified by civil disobedience, in which, when one breaks a current convention, one hopes thereby to establish a morally improved community” (28).

While Perez does not use that exact rhetoric, he, like many others, believes that there is no “right” to any closet, especially the celebrity closet.[5]

Perez hints at the homosexuality of a number of celebrities – Cruise, John Travolta, Clay Aiken, Jodie Foster, Queen Latifah, among others. (IMAGES 10 AND 11) His disdain for these celebrities hinges on what he perceives as their refusal to emerge from their very obvious closets. He disseminates this criticism through a number of channels, from boycotting MI-iii to calling on his readers to send flowers (providing a link to do so through ftld.com) to both closeted and open homosexuals on National Coming Out Day. (IMAGE 12)

Starting in September 2005, Perez embarked on a full-fledged campaign to out former N’Syncher Lance Bass. He focused on slips in Bass’ production of a straight star image — for example, Hilton coined the term “man-sharing” to explain the fact that Bass and friend Reichen Lehmkuhl, an openly gay reality star, were consistently photographed wearing each other’s clothing. (IMAGE 13) Perez was not only criticizing Bass’ refusal to come out: as a celebrity gossip blogger, he was criticizing Bass’ faulty image production. Hilton’s efforts culminated in the July 26th, 2006 cover of People Magazine, with a picture of Bass and the announcement “I’M GAY.” (IMAGE 14) Members of Bass’ family had read bits on his purported homosexuality in blogs such as Perez’, leading the actor at last to proclaim his sexuality publicly. Perez defended his actions, explaining,

“I know there is some controversy about outing people, but I also believe the only way we’re gonna have change is with visibility...if I have to drag some people screaming out of the closet, then I will. I think that lots of celebrities have an archaic fear that being gay will hurt their career but look at Rosie. Look at Ellen” (MSNBC.com).
Indeed, coming out has served as an immense boost to Bass' formerly stagnant career[6]—supporting Hilton's underlying assertion that coming out isn't just a moral obligation, it's an aspect of the economic production of stars.

In 2001, Cruise filed suit against Chad Taylor, aka Kyle Bradford, over an interview in the international magazine Acustar, in which the former porn star claimed to have engaged in an homosexual affair with Cruise. The Complaint of Defamation, available in full at The Smoking Gun, claims:

“Bradford's defamatory remarks are of the kind calculated to cause Cruise harm in his profession and his ability to earn [...] Losing the respect and enthusiasm of a substantial segment of the movie-going public would cause Cruise very substantial sums. While the plaintiff believes in the right of others to follow their own sexual preference, vast numbers of public throughout the world do not share that view and believing that he had a homosexual affair and did so during his marriage, they will be less inclined to patronize Cruise's films...” (thesmokinggun.com).

In other words, Cruise believes that public insinuation of homosexual activities will damage his star image and, in the process, his economic value. Perez' criticism of Cruise is thus double-sided: If Cruise is indeed gay, he is not only shirking his personal responsibility to the homosexual community, but perpetuating what Hilton views as an antiquated equation of homosexuality with economic depreciation.

Cruise has produced and profited from an unambiguously heterosexual star image. As an actively outing gay man, Perez subverts Cruise's meticulous star production, calling attention to the manner in which Cruise has constructed himself, focusing on his overly public relationship with Holmes. Through posts and gossip proliferation, Perez supplants Cruise's star image with one of the blogger's own: as a closeted homosexual whose efforts at star production are so poor, so out of touch with society, that bloggers could pull them apart and expose them to the consuming public. (IMAGE 15) In essence, Cruise misjudged his consumers – in the end, his conspicuous heterosexual displays only bolstered Hilton's claims. (IMAGE 16) Perez claims that

"being gay is not a death sentence in show business. We need to get out of that mind frame. It's 2006, people!" (MSNBC.com).[7]

And in 2006, while being gay may no longer economically kill a star, being the target of Perez' star-production-exposing blog very well may.

Manipulation

Dyer positions manipulation as the second component of the phenomenon of star production. In his conception, "out of this emphasis on manufacture, there develops an account of the star system as 'pure' manipulation. That is, both stardom and particular star are seen as owing their existence solely to the machinery of their production" (13). Hilton and the gossip blogger function as star manipulators themselves, but likewise put pressure on the idea that Hollywood can manipulate any image to please the public. Gossip bloggers are simultaneously engaged in and critical of the system—pointing to its holes as they stitch themselves into the fabric. Perez' choice of "cousin"/namesake, Paris Hilton, exemplifies this paradoxical practice.[8]

Interestingly, the underpinning of "Perez" and his blog is the empty promise of a star—and not just any star, but Paris Hilton, who has built her celebrity on being nothing but herself and doing nothing but existing. (IMAGE 17) Paris Hilton is what Daniel Boorstin defines as a "pseudo event"; or, as Dyer summarizes, a star who

"appear[s] to be meaningful but [is] in fact empty of meaning. Thus a star is well-known for her/his well-knownness, and not for any specific quality" (13).

Perez, like Paris, is a signifier of celebrity. People talk to him, give him clothes, and feature him in articles not because of any talent of his own, but for becoming well-known through his association with stars. In similar fashion, Perez has manipulated his image through his blog to be that of the quintessential "schwag-loving" star-fucker. (IMAGE 18) These are their public "personalities," but as Boorstin points out,

"stars do not have a 'strong character,' but a definable, publicizable personality: a figure which can become a nationally-advertised trademark" (162).

"Camp" and manipulation

Paris Hilton's blog persona is also "camp"—a label that necessitates a greater exploration into Perez and his relation to the camp sensibility. As Susan Sontag notes in her seminal essay,

"indeed the essence of Camp is its love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration" (275).

Reading through Perez' posts, his love of and revelry in "the spirit of extravagance," "corny flamboyant femaleness/exaggerated human-ness," and "things-being-what-they're-not"—all hallmarks of camp—are overwhelming (Sontag 279-83). The bulk of the blog is committed to the lives of high-profile celebrities, but Perez also consistently celebrates extremely campy idols: "Chyna," an androgynous professional female wrestler, (IMAGE 19) British glamour model "Jordan," (IMAGE 20) known for her flamboyant personal life and multiple breast enhancements, and others as varied as singer Ricky Martin and fashion maven Karl Lagerfield. (IMAGE 21) But these pseudo-stars represent only the most exaggerated of Perez' camp tastes; indeed, these men and women are so fantastically camp that it's difficult for those unacquainted with camp to appreciate such posts.
In contrast, Perez’ attention to Paris Hilton exemplifies a subtler form of camp taste that permeates the blog, based more on a love of surfaces and “instant character,” that constructs what Sontag refers to as

“a mode of enjoyment, of appreciation — not judgment” (286; 290).

Paris may very well be “empty of meaning” — she has manipulated her image to be that of a jet-setting, spoiled, ditzy fashionista, nothing but surface and image, as one-dimensional as the photos that appear on the screen in front of us. (IMAGE 22) Producing such a tightly controlled image, devoid of nuance or complication, is a feat worthy of celebration. Perez lauds Paris’ immaculate self-construction, but the manner in which he does so — with an underlying sense of camp — effectively undercuts the seriousness with which she takes herself.

For camping, at its heart, is innately duplicitous: there is a “straight,” public sense of a thing, contrasted with a “private, zany experience” (Sontag 281). Put differently, there is the way that the star means her image to be perceived, and the very different way that camp receives it. Revealing in this disparity between intended and received meaning, camp makes the means of manipulation obvious to the point of enjoyment. With his blog, Perez has free license to camp writ large — writing without editorial censorship to an audience of millions, he lets others in on what has long been a members-only form of humor.

Perez characterized his early career by lambasting Paris on a regular basis — in a post from November 5th, 2005, Perez proclaims, “Paris’ new book allows YOU the opportunity to confess your deepest, darkest, dirtiest secrets to the bitch that’s outfucked you and outskanked you and whom we all aspire to be!” (IMAGE 23)

But in the last year and a half, Paris and Perez have become “friends”; over the last year, Perez has posted a dozens of photos documenting his attendance at various events hosted or attended by Paris (IMAGES 24 AND 25). Here, the celebrity blogger is interpolated into the world of the pseudo-event. While the photos undoubtedly assist in manipulating Perez’ own star image as gossip authority, the fact that the photos are sweaty, somewhat unattractive, ordinary, and even boring, affects the star of both Hiltons in a different way. By posing for and posting these photos, Perez reifies the pseudo-event of both Paris and himself; at the same time, he calls attention to the fact that Paris has normal, boring house parties like anyone else — exposing the cracks in her image as impeccably styled socialite.

Such exposure was made possible by new media. The fact that Perez could attend a party by himself, shoot dozens of pictures on his digital camera, and post those photos the next morning attests to the immediacy of the blog. Usually, gossip mongers are forced to wait for paparazzi photos to accompany their columns, which are published weekly or daily. Perez transcends the traditional model for gossip by going to the celebrity herself, documenting the night, posting it on his blog, and making it an event. As Lev Manovich emphasizes, “with new media, a new area has emerged. As ‘professional technology’ becomes accessible to amateurs, new media professionals create new standards, formats, and design expectations to maintain their status” (120).

Amateur photographer and web designer Perez takes blurry photos on his digital camera. (IMAGE 26) He posts them to his blog using a pre-set template. Yet these, and other photos posted to the “Personally Perez” section of the site, have worked to close the gap between “professional” blog sites — Gawker is a good example of a slick, professional site — and “amateur” sites like Hilton’s. If Perez is getting the first-hand scoop, he maintains his status, regardless of amateur standards. Or, better yet, Perez’ style — first hand star-fucking, low production standards, camp humor — becomes the new standard.

Fashion

Celebrity fashion has always generated gossip, and Internet gossip takes no less of an interest in what stars wear. In fact, fashion may appear the purest, most superficial form of star manipulation, as I.C. Jarvie points out,

“one function a star serves is to fix a type of beauty, to help a physical type identify itself” (14). In this way, “types of beauty” are made to “define attractiveness” (14).

Dyer likewise asserts that a change in fashion is a change in social meaning — when a star dyes her hair from blonde to red, for example, it constitutes a change in the social meaning of her star. If, as previously asserted, stars rise and fall because of the ability of their individual social meanings to resonate within society, then a change in fashion can prove disastrous or fortuitous. The gossip blog does more than display the fashion of the star — through the innate functions of the blog, it subtly calls attention to fashion as a means of production.

Perez Hilton is by no means the blogging authority on fashion. For sites devoted to celebrity fashion, see The Satorialist or Manolo’s Shoe Blog. With that said, Perez, like all those interested in celebrity gossip, cannot escape commentary on, criticism and promotion of fashion. The dependence of Internet gossip on visual imagery makes it a constant topic. With each picture, one is immediately drawn to comment on appearance — clothes, face, hair, shoes, skin tone, hands — and use it as a starting point for interpreting the meaning or significance of the photo. Perez’ camp sensibilities easily translate to an attention to fashion and surface: as Dyer explains in his essay “It’s Being So Camp As Gets Us Going,” camp

“is a way of prizing the form of something away from its content, of reveling in the style while dismissing the content as trivial” (The Culture of Queens 52).

Focusing on these elements of style, Perez has his clear favorites: and, of course, also his subjects of consistent ridicule. What
distinguishes Hilton’s treatment of fashion from print media’s lies in two key components to the blog: categorization and and reader-response.

Categorization

Blogs often have sorting and categorizing options built into their design. Perez' categorizing method is rather straightforward. Each photo receives several tags: one for each star pictured, plus additional tags if it falls into a Perez-pre-established category, including “Gay Gay Gay,” “Fashion Smashion,” “Fun ‘n’ Fluff,” and “SIGHTings.” As evidenced by the titles, in sorting a picture into an established category, Perez establishes the meaning of the photo. For example, once a photo of Jake Gyllenhaal and a male friend working out is filed under “Gay Gay Gay,” it takes on an entirely new significance (IMAGES 27 AND 28). The same holds true for Perez’ labeling of fashion. Placing a photo in “Fashion Smashion” (as opposed to “Fashion & Beauty”) automatically tips off the reader as to the intended meaning. Print media uses a similar technique to distinguish between the front pages (filled with celebs wearing beautiful dresses) and the back pages (“What Were They Thinking?” fashion designer critique of fashion mistakes, etc.). The blog one-ups the fashion mag with its ability to retrieve all “Fashion Smashion” posts, from one week to one year ago, from one easily clickable location. Explaining this aspect of Internet communication, Lev Manovich calls attention to the manner in which New Media creates “predefined menus” (e.g., Perez’ database of photos, sorted into categories) prepped for user-selection, a process that allows “end users [to] feel that they are not just consumers but ‘authors’ creating a new media object or experience” (125).

When a reader uses the “StarSeeker” pull-down menu to select a category, he is creating his own experience of the blog, viewing it in a completely different form, order, and context than it was originally displayed.

This power of “authorship” over one’s own gossip experience takes on particular meaning when applied to fashion. Scrolling through the “Fashion Smashion” section, posts that initially appeared in no relation to each other co-exist on the same page. Jennifer Lopez appears smartly dressed and styled in a post entitled, “THIS is why Jennifer Lopez is a style icon,” (IMAGE 29) followed by a picture of Kirsten Dunst, hair and dress haphazard, stumbling down the street (IMAGE 30). The contrast that results from the user’s personal authorship changes the meaning of the original post – Lopez’ fashion sense and classiness are heightened, while Dunst’s are lessened. In this way, Perez assists in establishing stars as superlatives – an idea key to Dyer’s conception of the star. Perez’ sorting allows the reader to insinuate Lopez as the “most stylish,” while Dunst becomes the “most bag-ladyish.” At this point, as affirmed by Violette Morn, the star “dissolves into the superlative, [is] indistinguishable from it, they become superlative” (Dyer 43).

Most Bag-Ladyish becomes the meaning of Dunst and determines her acceptance or rejection in society. The image of the bag lady conveys multiple messages: Dunst doesn’t care about fashion, which connotes she doesn’t care what the public thinks about her, which in turn conveys the idea that Dunst is disinterested in her fans and ungrateful for her success. Ungrateful may be translated as unworthy – if she were a worthy star, then she would care about her appearance in public. This is the “meaning” of Dunst’s fashion choices, disseminated and enunciated by Perez in his blog.

Reader-response

Perez Hilton pressures notions of “fashion” by inviting readers to comment on or “decide” whether an outfit, dye job, or new “look” is attractive. On May 8th, Hilton posted a picture of Jessica Simpson presenting at the 2006 ALMA Awards, which honor Hispanics in Hollywood. Hilton challenged his readers to examine Simpson’s curly auburn bob, tightly fitted orange dress, and deeply bronzed skin, and debate “Jessica Simpson’s New Look: Love it or Leave it? YOU Decide!” (IMAGE 31). Over three hundred reader comments follow, including “She looks like an oompa loompa” and “Does anyone else ever notice that in some pictures she looks like an old ass Texan grandma?” As the comments proceed, they transcend mere fashion commentary, declaring, “She is trying way too hard these days to be something she not,” “She and her sister symbolize everything that is wrong with our culture,” and “Kinda racist to go in black face (or in this case “brown face”) to the ALMA awards, no?” Here, we see a change in fashion connote a change in social meaning: as opposed to her former All-American, blonde-haired, innocent image, this picture encapsulates the change in Simpson’s star and social meaning following her separation from Nick Lachay. From reader responses, we gather that she appears as an absurd and fake chameleon, racially insensitive, an embodiment of “all that’s wrong with our country.” All this meaning, from a single photo. While many visitors to Hilton’s site do not participate in or read comments, such commentary nevertheless documents greater societal reactions. Unlike letter sections in print gossip, these responses are immediate, uncensored, and interactive – they feed on one another, constructing an overarching sentiment towards the star and his/her fashion choice. In this way, they constitute a goldmine of public opinion, a way to monitor how society feels about a particular star at a particular moment.

As celebrities are dependent on visual imagery to maintain their presence in society, fashion will most likely always be a determining factor in their popularity. Gossip bloggers represent a heightened awareness of fashion – not only through their ability to post large numbers of images, but also through the particular characteristics of the blog that pronounce and reify the social meaning of each fashion choice and, by direct association, the star who wears it.

Magic and talent

Yet another category that influences the production and consumption of a star is public sense of a star’s magic and talent. Dyer explains that

“a very common view...though not intellectually very respectable, is that stars are stars because they are exceptional, gifted, wonderful” (16).
If we accept this idea, then we must determine at what an actor is exceptional or gifted – according to Dyer, the skill is “not ‘acting’ in the classic sense, as numerable examples show. Skill then at being at being a certain sort of person or image” (17).

Hilton and his blog showcase magic and talent in becoming “a certain sort of image” in two ways, functioning as pure fan and as critical observer.

There is no doubt that Hilton is a fan. It seems a requisite for blogging with such frequency and passion. When dealing with his favorite stars (Paris, Madonna, Janet Jackson, Britney Spears, and Angelina Jolie) Hilton is not shy in expressing adoration. The words “brazilliant,” “hot,” and “this is why we love” convey affection and admiration. For Perez, such admiration of is often explicitly linked to a smart self-marketing move on the part of the star. On April 16th, following the birth of Gwenyth Paltrow’s son Moses, Perez posted the following:

Do the laws of supply and demand apply to the paparazzi? Gwyneth Paltrow hopes so! The new mom to Moses was glowing as she carefully unveiled her new baby boy to the world, in front of A LOT of paparazzi, which means that no one particular shot will be worth more than the other. In fact, all of them will be worth probably the same and the market will be saturated with that shot. Knowing Paltrow, she will probably not keep new baby Moses in hiding, hoping that by doing the same repetitive tasks with the baby each day maybe even wearing the same clothes the paparazzi will see no monetary incentive to follow her around every day. Yay for economics! Enjoy your mommy time Gwyneth. (IMAGE 32)

With this post, Perez lays bare the economics of the paparazzi and Paltrow’s savvy manipulation of them. With her baby’s photo so readily available, the market will close for new pictures, allowing Paltrow and her family privacy from the paparazzi. In a similar vein, following the much-anticipated birth of Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt’s daughter Shiloh Nouvel, Perez posted

“She’s such a smart cookie! On the same day The Baby was born, Santa Angelina had her lawyers snatch up the domain name ShilohNouvelJolie-Pitt.com. Crafty!” (May 31st).

His praise for Jolie is not based on any acting skill, but rather her knowledge and control of the media. Control over the media extends to control over one’s own image; the tighter control a celebrity possesses over his/her own image, the more authentically magic and talented he/she appears.

One may readily discern who does or does not have “magic and talent” in Perez’ eyes through observation of his posting styles. In his opinion, there are two categories of stars: those who deserve to be famous, and those who do not. His posts concerning “real” stars focus on lifestyles: stars’ ability to present themselves as a particular “type” through commodity consumption. In these posts, the woman is presented as “spectacle” – her clothes, her children, her dining habits are deconstructed and analyzed, all because she is interesting enough (talented enough) to garner such attention. Put differently, she deserves the attention of the media, Perez, and his readership, for she has produced her image so skillfully as to appear seamless, believable, real.

Conversely, celebrities who do not deserve attention are ridiculed for their attempts at spectacle. Their displays of conspicuous consumption – as defined by Dyer, “the way by which the wealthy display that they are wealthy”; the very backbone of the star lifestyle – are criticized, rather than celebrated (38). Perez calls attention to stars that continue to posture as such long after the capital of their talent has been exhausted – favorite examples include Jennifer Love Hewitt, Tori Spelling, and former Backstreet Boys. Unlike the caricatures of celebrity in which Perez revels, these stars land somewhere between the truly magical and the truly camp; they are neither a pure construction nor pure talent, but a sad mess in between. In the language of camp, they’re simply not “bad” enough to be good.

For example, Tori Spelling and Nicole Richie may be equally untalented – both became famous for being the daughter of a famous father, and neither has garnered praise for acting ability. The difference, however, is that Richie is “talented” in sustaining and producing her image – even if those means of production include possible anorexia and an on-again/off-again relationship with a DJ. (IMAGE 33) Richie keeps herself interesting by sustaining a feud with Paris Hilton, by dressing with increasing glamour and style, and by overcoming heroin addiction. Her life is absurd and clichéd, but at the same time, much like a train wreck, you just can’t look away.

Spelling, however, is uninteresting – apart from a somewhat tumultuous love life, she has done little more than coast on her fame from Beverly Hills 90210 – and therefore, she is untalented, and undeserving of media attention.[10] Granted, Perez promotes his individual taste and discernment of talent. He does so in a way that regularly utilizes new media in the form of links to mp3s, videos, and film previews, a technique that distinguishes his promotion from the endorsements of print media. He regularly promotes singers with his “Listen to this!” posts, most recently pushing Paris Hilton’s forthcoming single, “Blinded by the Stars.” Perez claims, “You are going to be very impressed by Paris’s new album,” but also asks “let us know what you think!” By providing a direct link to a song and inviting immediate feedback, Perez creates a direct avenue for consumption and personal evaluation. The post has thus garnered 972 comments, both criticizing and praising the single, but even more interestingly, lambasting Perez for his shameless plug for Paris. A post from “Inkling” exemplifies the overarching critique of the readers:

Perez, We both know Paris is talentless and that you’re sudden about-face re: anything having to do with her is totally business-related. You treat her with kid gloves on your site therefore you get invited to more parties and can advertise for her failing show — you meet more people to make more connections to get more gossip for the site. A guy’s gotta make a living. I’ll never fault you for that. In short: your hair looks good. Paris still sucks.

By allowing comments, Perez’ opinions of magic and talent are questioned and pressured, effectively exposing himself as part of the
very mechanism that he, in turn, blogs to expose. I would argue that Perez is knowledgeable of this, even revels in it—he regularly refers to himself as on “the Z list,” has no shame in promoting the clothes given to him online and in interviews, and posts (grovels) for party invites. In other words, Hilton exposes himself—he realizes that his only talent or magic lies in his ability to be snarky and draw Photoshop arrows—and in so doing, further exposes the mechanisms of star production.

**Nature of the medium**

Dyer stresses the manner in which

“the close-up reveals the unmediated personality of the individual, and this belief in the ‘capturing’ and the ‘unique’ ‘person’ of a performer is probably central to the star phenomena” (15).

The close-up, a key element to narrative cinema, should create what Bela Balazs terms a “silent monologue,” forming a connection between the star and the viewer. The “medium” of Dyer and Balazs’s discussion is film, but the same principle may be readily applied to the Internet blog. The “medium” in question is both the celebrity photo and the blog; their collective function performs a specific task in connecting or alienating the viewer from the star.

In his essay “The Face of Garbo,” Roland Barthes draws attention to the power of the close-up. Barthes asserts that

“Garbo still belongs to that moment in cinema when capturing the human face still plunged audiences into the deepest ecstasy, when one literally lost oneself in a human image as one would in a philter, when the face represented a kind of absolute state of the flesh, which could be neither reached nor renounced” (56).

He concludes that “the face of Garbo reconciles two iconographic ages, it assures the passage from awe to charm,” situating Audrey Hepburn and her “unique specification of the face, which has nothing of the essence left in it” as the face of charm. As such

“Garbo’s singularity was of the order of the concept, that of Audrey Hepburn is of the order of the substance. The face of Garbo is an Idea, that of Hepburn an Event” (57).

Barthes was writing in the late 50s, but this idea of cultural significance connected to the close-up may be extended to the present. With New Media, we have moved to yet another iconographic age: from awe to charm to disbelief. If the face of Garbo is an Idea, and Hepburn’s face is an Event, then the face of Jessica Simpson, of Angelina Jolie, or of Paris Hilton is a Question. Is the photo real? Have wrinkles been airbrushed; have the lips had collagen injections? Has the picture been manipulated to represent an idea or event that does not, in fact, exist? Whose image has been recycled to form that of the new celebrity? In short, not only cosmetic surgery but also Photoshop and digital technology have forever altered the meaning of the close-up and the celebrity photograph in general, working to endlessly question the signs of star production.

As a thoroughly postmodern facet of new media, Photoshop allows for perpetual re-selection: if a celebrity doesn’t like her lips, they may be airbrushed to resemble another set, one more compatible with her desired image. In this way,

“rather than assembling more media recordings of reality, culture is now busy reworking, recombining, and analyzing already accumulated media material” (Manovich 131).

To put it in Manovich’s terms, a star is thus the “author” of the “object” of her image; as she composites her image from pieces which she did not create,

“the creative energy of the author goes into the selection and sequencing of elements rather than into original design” (130).

Production of star image in postmodern times dictates a process of selection, attempting to reproduce the awe and charm of earlier (un)digitally-mediated stars. The resulting image is a simulacrum of the classic movie star, attempting semblance to the ideas of awe and charisma made iconic in the faces of both Garbo and Hepburn.

Hilton and his fellow gossip bloggers call attention to the mediation that occurs in the postmodern, Photoshop-dependent era, exposing the void that lies beneath the simulacrum. In other words, gossip bloggers attempt to answer the question posed by the images of contemporary stars, repeatedly addressing issues of manipulation. Wielding his own rudimentary knowledge of Photoshop, Perez uses the “paint” function to point to specific questions of production. In this way, Perez denies stars the chance to author themselves by drawing attention to their attempts. With a picture of Victoria Beckham posted March 7th, Hilton declares

“Victoria Beckham would be so pretty...if she hadn’t had so many damn procedures.”

In the accompanying photo, four hand “painted” arrows point to Beckham’s nose, cheeks, brow, and breasts (IMAGE 34). This photo, along with dozens of others posted under the category “Knifestyles,” make visible the question of the mediated image, simultaneously providing an answer.

Perez, like many other gossip bloggers, follows Beckham closely, and with good reason: like Paris, she is composed only wholly of surfaces, a true pseudo-event. She first came to fame as a member of The Spice Girls, a group composed of five women, each of whom took on a singular personality characteristic to be emphasized through their dress, attitude, and general image. The group was extravagant, enormously successful, and wholly dependent on surface-level stereotype: pure camp. (IMAGE 35) Beckham, formerly Victoria Adams, was labeled “Posh Spice,” a look she manifested in the form of short black dresses, heavy eyeliner, and disinterested stares in her public appearances, projecting a dumbed-down simulacrum of classic Hollywood sophistication. Beckham’s current look is a...
Beckham, along with stylish soccer star husband David Beckham, have successfully acquired the visual accouterments and commodities of a posh lifestyle. To sustain her star persona, Victoria Beckham need only sustain her established image, even if this process necessitates plastic surgery and a suspected eating disorder. If the reader selects the Victoria Beckham category, Perez’ photoshopped post of Beckham’s surgeries appears between numerous others, with exclamations of “Feed me!” scrawled beside bony arms and Beckham’s somewhat emaciated face. (IMAGE 39) When regarded as such, Hilton’s posts serve as an amplification and critique of Beckham’s process of image maintenance.

Hilton points even more explicitly to the process of selection with posts filed “Separated at Birth.” While some of the photos point out ridiculous similarities between a star and cartoon character or convicted criminal, (IMAGE 40) they also emphasize the manner in which stars borrow and select from the images of others to form their own. (IMAGE 41) By placing two photos side by side, the likeness between two stars and their respective images is undeniable. In a “Separated at Birth” post from May 17th, Perez displays several photos of Christina Aguilera, taken for the recent issue of GQ, and several of Janet Jackson (IMAGES 42 and 43). He suggests,

“These Xtina photos look familiar? Geez, wonder where Miss Dirrrrrty got her inspiration.”

Both sets of photos feature Aguilera/Jackson completely naked, covered only by strategically placed sheets. The poses are indeed near identical. But, as one savvy commentator points out,

“Marilyn Monroe posed for Bert Stern with similar poses. So, who is copying whom? If anything Christina has the look down way more than Janet with the platinum hair, dark liner, and red lips. Not to mention the more voluptuous and provocative poses. Although Janet looks great, her poses are too restricted.”

Through the combined efforts of blogger and reader, the construction of the image is revealed: both Aguilera and Jackson are posed in a manner reminiscent of Monroe, whose sexual connotations they wish to appropriate.

Hilton returns to the comparison on May 21st with a side-by-side comparison of Monroe and Aguilera, both clutching a towel in their teeth, paired with the heading, “Can’t she come up with an original pose?” (IMAGE 46) If we consider this to be the Question of the image, then a reader comment puts a fine point on the answer:

“There isn’t such a thing as an original pose anymore. Everything has been done.”

While Hilton may have initially missed Aguilera’s homage to Monroe, the vast majority of the time, he, along with other gossip bloggers and their respective armies of informants, do catch such similarities, broadcasting the manner in which stars’ images function as composites of selected features. Whether or not the stars are then critiqued as inauthentic depends entirely on their skill at image construction. For example, since these original posts, Perez has retracted much of his criticism of Aguilera, emphasizing its connection to the 30s and 40s atmosphere of her new album, which Aguilera has described as an homage to Old Hollywood. I suspect whether or not he continues to support Aguilera will largely depend on the success of her album – if the public likes it, he’ll declare her a genius, and continue in his praise of her various attempts at image reconstruction. If it fails, he will most likely return to ridiculing her too-obvious selection of past “posh” looks, revamped in order to disassociate herself from the connotations of her old image, i.e. fake, cheap glamour. Beckham is attempting to “author” herself – a process that is self-evident when regarding her “category.” After several failed albums, Beckham’s former avenue to stardom is essentially blocked. The only way for her to still be a star is to continue appearing in public as a star. In other words, she “shows up” places where one is certain to be photographed, such as Ivy in London, Koi in Los Angeles, or at Fashion Week in Paris, in outfits that solidly her selected posh image (IMAGE 36). The contents of Beckham’s category on Hilton’s website are variations on this selfsame theme: Posh dines out with fashionable husband, Posh goes skiing in all leather, Posh tries on shoes with Katie Holmes at Barney’s (IMAGES 37 AND 38). Regarded collectively, they illuminate Beckham’s attempt at image production. [11]

Conclusions

Through his blog, Perez has initiated a new way to perceive stars, using a sort of absolute value scale to evaluate the signs of star production. To obtain Perez’ attention and endorsement, a star must be completely surface level – glaring signs of image production, pure camp, bad enough to be good – or so skilled at image production as to erase such signs entirely. The million-plus readers of his blog have, perhaps obliviously, begun to co-opt this method of judgment. What does this tell us about the state of the star system, the gossip it inspires, and the society that consumes it?
To explore this question, I return to the example of Cruise, a major star for the last 20 years. In 1983, there was something distinctive in the way that Tom Cruise appeared in All the Right Moves (Chapman) – the film opens with shots of his dreary milltown home, shifting to a sleeping Cruise, who awakes with an endearing bleariness, his eyes still sparkling from dreams. Throughout the film, Cruise is earnest, impassioned, and cocky – his set, square jaw, his self-assured flirtiness with girlfriend Lea Redmond, the affected swagger of the 5'6" man. (IMAGE 47) This film, juxtaposed with Risky Business (Brickman 1983), released just months apart, were what first made Cruise a star: he appears equally authentic as a home-alone son, taking over the mansion, (IMAGE 48) and the scrappy cornerback, desperate for a way to escape the steel legacy of his family. (IMAGE 49) His image, meticulously constructed by top publicist Pat Kingsley, served as the common denominator of the films that solidified Cruise’s star – Top Gun (Scott 1986), The Color of Money (Scorsese 1986), Born on the Fourth of July (Stone 1989). In short, his image was so unified, so believable, that the signs of its construction were invisible. 

In 2002, David Thomson wrote that for Cruise to maintain his star, he would have to “remake himself at every turn – and there may not be enough good people to trust. He is very professional – but is there now a profession?” (193).

Thomson brings us back to the purpose of this paper: while I would not go so far to assert that the profession is completely dead, I will claim that the star system will never be the same, and the emergence of New Media, gossip blogs included, are the reason. Cruise was often likened to another broad shouldered lady’s man by the name of Clark Gable, and for a time, he seemed ready to join the colossal stars of the past – Grant, Grant, Garbo, Hepburn – as one who could play both the everyday and the extraordinary. He was simultaneously likable – you could be pals, if he moved into the rambler next door – but, at the same time, on a completely different level, untouchable, godlike, a Top Gun, worthy of devotion and admiration. A large part of that which established the above stars of a past generation was a conflation of star image and star role – the fact that Cary Grant married his fifth wife at age 76 only reinforced his image as the ultimate (authentic) likable cad. You looked at a picture of him, watched a film of his, heard gossip about him, and it all fed back to a single united image, so immensely attractive in its harmonized message.

What has changed, then, and where Cruise has run into trouble, is that in the age of New Media, there are no colossal stars, nor will there ever be. No one is larger than life – rather, they are manipulated simulacra of life. With New Media, there are simply too many aspects of the star image, too many roads leading to a permanently de-centralized Rome. Of course, the images of Gable, Garbo, or Grant were, at their heart, constructions. However, the public was more accepting then; there were fewer discourses surrounding the star, which allowed the viewer to forgo skepticism, finding herself willing to believe. The problem, then, is that we are no longer willing to believe anything – we have been disillusioned and made skeptical by so much technology, so much manipulation, that perhaps the only film that we are willing to believe is that of a plane flying into the World Trade Center. Tom Cruise has fallen from the limelight because he attempted to make the shift from 20th to 21st century star, trading his rare appearances and relative secrecy for overexposure and outspokenness. Before our current age of digitalization, Cruise’s infamous coach-jumping would have been documented and disseminated, but, after a few months, perhaps forgotten, fading from public consciousness. New Media, however, allows that tape to be circulated and viewed again and again, its audio track morphed into a dance remix.

The legends of the early stars of cinema were in large part attributed to the novelty of the medium – and we have become wearied, disaffected, and unimpressed by mere film projection. We clamor for the next level, demanding immediate access to photos, film, music, gossip. We are addicted to the likes of Perez Hilton because he feeds us exactly what we want: he makes visible the signs of star production, telling us where to direct our consumption. Our inability to be awed, our reluctance to believe – this is what has changed the star system.

As a film scholar, I suppose I thrive on my own ability to make visible the signs of star production, to draw attention to why we like stars. In this way, I am not so different from Perez – I write scholarly papers, he posts snarky posts – but we both concentrate on and call attention to the machinery of Hollywood. But at the same time, I’m saddened by my own assertion that we will never again believe enough in anything to hold it up for true adoration. Perez and I grew up in the ‘80s, when Cruise, Madonna, and Michael Jackson were turning into an immense image of itself, an overwhelming question – what will remain for them to believe in, and who will think it important, as both Perez and I so obviously do, to tell them the answers?

Notes

1. At the time of writing, Mi-iii, with a domestic gross of $133 million (compared with a budget of $150 million+) clearly performed far below expectations.

2. Bear in mind, this is more of a suggestive hopeful vision than reality: while Perez asserts that star consumers have become accepting of homosexuality, in reality, coming out would in all probability significantly decrease Cruise’s earning power.

3. According to a survey conducted by the Simmons Market Research Bureau, gays represent the ultimate “DINK” market – Double Income, No Kids. The annual value of the gay and lesbian market exceeds $514 billion; the average household income for gay men was $52,624, 41% above the national average.

4. In a post from July 14th, in response to criticism from the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation for speculating about sexuality, Perez writes “We don’t have the support of our people, and we love it! If we’re hated, that means we’re doing something
right....We don't need your support, bitches. Michael Musto has been outing people for years, and he is our hero!”

5. As he proclaims in a broadcast of Ring My Bell, posted on October 18th, “if you’re a celebrity or a politician, you’re fair game.”

6. Bass is currently developing a reality show for UPN; in October of 2006, Bass and Reichen were presented with the Human Rights Campaign Visibility Award.

7. While Perez remains firm in his stance that coming out as a homosexual will not damage one's career, I must agree with Cruise: his star image is predicated on such an intense sense of masculinity that coming out as a homosexual would undoubtedly deharmonize his constructed image. Granted, Perez seems to be arguing that his attempts at hiding his homosexuality – his relationship with Cruise in particular – have already enacted such a deharmonization....so why not come out?

8. In a recently televised Queer Edge interview, Perez explains the genesis of his name as such: while club-hopping on New Year’s Eve in Miami, as they left each club, the promoter would exclaim “Oh don’t leave – Paris Hilton is coming later.” According to Hilton, after the third or fourth club, he realized that Paris Hilton definitely wasn’t coming – they were simply using the promise of her name to convince people to stay and buy more drinks. He turned to his friends and announced “Puh-lease, Paris Hilton is not showing up, but Perez Hilton might!” Watch the interview in its entirety at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BOOcM6iEu7c&search=perez%20hilton.

9. Reader-response also provides a forum for the debate over Perez' outing. Following an August 6th post in which Perez asserts the homosexuality of Clay Aiken, “Nancy” responds:

“Once again, Perez....It is not your right nor is it your responsibility to out someone and to even ask people to do the dirty work for you. What is up with that? It is nothing short of vicious.”

“Katie” expands this thought further, writing

“Just because you are a flamboyantly and openly gay person and that works for you, doesn't mean that it will work for everyone. Your work and much of your image, or “gimmick” per say, is based on being gay. This is not true for Clay Aiken. He found fame through American Idol. A majority of American Idol’s viewers are religious middle Americans. Furthermore, America is not yet a country where most of it’s general population can look at an entertainer purley for talent and not judge them based on their personal lives.”

10. Interestingly, Hilton originally encouraged readers to watch Spelling’s new reality show; he was even invited to her wedding. But after Spelling and her fiancé eloped, eliminating her potential for publicity, both by Perez and the rest of the gossip world, he has turned against her – clearly, her move indicates an unwise publicity move, which further decreases her skill at celebrity and worthiness of affection. The dichotomy between “deserving” and “undeserving” stars reinforces the notion that “magic” and “talent” are indeed essential to the production of a star.

11. Beckham also designs mid-priced jeans for Rock and Republic, effectively commodifying her own image and allowing others to purchase and emulate (and thus reify it) for themselves.

12. Indeed, in a post from June 29th, Perez writes “We used to be a Britney fan through thick and thin, but Spears has thoroughly disappointed us (repeatedly) lately. Christina, on the other hand, has been turning it out. The singer looks stunning on the cover of her new album. Team Aguilera all the way!”

13. See Britney Spears’s site for a particularly compelling example

14. For more on Kingsley and her skill at managing Cruise's image, see Anne Thompson, “Pitt vs. Cruise: A Tale of Two Publicists.”

Works cited


Read More: Celebrity gossip juicy celebrity rumors Hollywood gossip blog from Perez Hilton http://perezhilton.com/page/13/#ixzz0mchgC7H4 Celebrity Juice, Not from Concentrate. Ummm thoughts: Separated At Birth.Â Are we sure the new Sex and the City doesn't take place in Chernobyl? That would explain this poster. I mean, I think I see a radiation cloud behind them. Source: Screencave via ONTD Posted by: Michael K 56 comments äëc ShareThis Photoshop Awards. Annnnd a few hours later, from Perez: Photoshop Awardz: Final Poster For Menopause & The City 2!! Filed under: Icky Icky Poo > Sarah Jessica Parker > Photoshop Awardz > Cynthia Nixon > Sex & The City > Kristin Davis > Kim Cattrall. Celebrity blogging have also spawned stars such as Perez Hilton who is well known for not only blogging, but also outing celebrities.[63]. Social media sites have also contributed to the fame of some celebrities, such as Tila Tequila who became known through MySpace.[64]. Families.Â "Celebrity juice, not from concentrate: Perez Hilton, gossip blogs, and the new star production". Jump Cut. 49. ^ Trebay, Guy "She's Famous (and So Can You)". Jump Cut. 49. ^ en.wikinews.org. ^ International Association of Close Protection Officers. The blog is The go-to source for daily happenings in Hollywood. Written by the internet's most notorious gossip columnist, Perez Hilton. Submit your secrets and gossip to me. Celebrity juice, not from concentrate. And Perez is back! Your worst nightmare. Weâ€™ve been keeping tabs on the Love Games series ever since it started, and proud to say that we were some of the first fans. A Little Secret, the final movie, has started filming in LA this week!! Safe to say, weâ€™re excited.Â Iâ€™m dying to get in touch with one of the starsâ€” everybody go send an email to Tyler Vogel, Parkerâ€™s publicist, for an exclusive interview! With the power of the Perezes, we can do it! Keep in touch. -Perez.