

I. Amateurs at early ages.

Many of us, at an early age, were brought in front of friends and relatives to have our talents put on display. We were made to sing, dance, and play the piano or other musical instruments over and over again. While some enjoyed and even appreciated the attention, others were thoroughly embarrassed. The rare 1/10th of the 1% who actually appeared to have true talents are often quickly brought to the attention of voice teachers or other appropriate judges of the talents in question to have an assessment done and determine if those students could truly be among the rarest of the rare, worthy perhaps of actual recognition.

Many with moderate to high-end talents make their way through high school chorus into the collegiate music system. At this stage, graduates generally direct or conduct teach theory and other components of composing. Performance majors may get the opportunity to meet peers and either collaborate or form a group with them; some may have the occasion to meet famous performers who might inspire these students to great things. And in today's world, the internet has opened up new avenues to showcase all kinds of talent. From TV programs focused on performance or talent contests to internet channels with endless stream of recorded contents, a person have many chances to practice and hone his skills to see what heights he might reach.

Vocabulary

1. Collegiate
2. Avenue
3. Judge
4. Performance
5. Assessment

Discussion Questions

1. How difficult or rare is it to become a very famous performing artist, such as a singer or a dancer?
2. Do you think that raw talent or practice is more important to become a successful performing artist?
3. Do you enjoy going to see live shows with singers and/or dancers?
4. In your opinion, do talent competitions on TV discover real talent, or do they just try to turn ordinary singers and dancers into stars?
5. Would you like to be a famous performing artist such as a singer or dancer? Why or why not?

|| Young stars and their tragic fall.

It does not take a person very long to see that nepotism often plays a part in the entertainment industry. There are usually two generations of a family or sometimes more working in television or films everywhere we look. There are some examples where all are equally entertaining and sometimes even work successfully together. However, there are also instances where a member, even with the support and familiarity of what the clan goes through, has to be “propped up”. This one abuses alcohol, drugs, or worst of all self-harm or commit suicide. Many wonder, “How could this happen? They seemed to have everything in the world at their feet.”

Perhaps that is part of the sad problem. This has also been happening to a lot of young rising stars not from any showbiz families. Is it the amount of pressure they get from the constant attention? Is it the party lifestyle? Or perhaps they were just too young and incapable of dealing with fame and stardom? I most definitely do not feel any sorrier for them than for anyone else struggling to make it in the world. We each handle things in different ways, and can only do the best we can. Some struggle every day for a number of difficulties in their lives. Sadly we have lost a lot of young stars this way. And this leaves us living in the “real world” to wonder what could have gone wrong or what more could they want?

Vocabulary

1. Nepotism
2. Suicide
3. Stardom
4. Propped up
5. Lifestyle

Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the pros and cons of being a famous star?
2. Why do some stars end up abusing drugs or alcohol?
3. How can having famous friends or a famous family member help someone’s career?
4. Would you like to be famous? Why or why not?
5. If you could meet a famous star, who would it be and why?

|||. Famous old and new entertainment acts.

From time immemorial, entertainment has been one of the greatest and most popular forms of stress relief. Many travelling bands of theatrical and circus acts used to perform in cities and towns all over Europe and Asia. There were lion tamers, high wire performers, trapeze artists, and of course the ever-present clowns. While circuses have fallen somewhat out of favor in recent years, they once were the talk of the town and looked forward to by children nearly as much as Christmas.

In the internet age, though, where most people have the attention span of a flea, new ways to entertain the masses have emerged. Vocal and instrumental music has always been appealing for hundreds of years if not more. Yet the popularity and varieties of this type of act have not diminished but have become archetypical reaching audiences around the world. 'YouTube' is now a household name, and they not only 'audition' new acts but do an outstanding job of maintaining a running database of artists and performers as well as their works. Other niche performances like stand-up comedy, variety shows, and contests have risen and fallen in popularity over the years. Back now are the talent contests, and with the new found popularity, back to stay it would appear.

Vocabulary

1. Act
2. Niche
3. Archetypical
4. Audition
5. Attention span

Discussion Questions

1. Why has entertainment been popular, so it would seem, since the dawn of man? Why has it stayed popular?
2. Name three types of act which have retained their popularity over the years.
3. Name three which have not. Why?
4. Describe a circus if you have ever been to one. What are clowns and what do they do?
5. What has YouTube done for the popularity of professional and amateur acts?

IV. The film industry, in the USA and the rest of the world.

If you were to collect all the most famous professional performers from around the world and put them together, you would almost certainly find that more Americans made up more people in this group than any other nationality. But more famous does not necessarily mean better or more talented; and there is a lot to be said about quality versus quantity. There are many fine performers and just as many disciples from lands far outside the USA as well. Every year, a list of new potential filmmakers and acting talents enter the worlds of waitressing, bar work, and web blogging, among others, to make ends meet while they continue to develop their creative abilities and pursue their dreams of making it big. Unfortunately, only a small proportion of these hopefuls will do so.

Worldwide, California is probably the most famous place for film making and film schools, but there are many excellent film schools outside California and outstanding movies are made all over the world. Although many come by whatever means necessary to attend the universities in the USA, there are also a number who stay in their native lands and put their creative weight into works of cultural and historical significance. Some are even doing ground-breaking 3D film making, and even making advances in animation on top of that. But, perhaps because of the old promise of the American Dream, many talented and potential stars arrive in the USA by boat, train, wagon, or plane every day.

Vocabulary

1. Talent
2. Filmmakers
3. Ground-breaking
4. Contemporaries
5. Proportion

Discussion Questions

1. Why do film and acting students come to Hollywood to take auditions and to have their scripts read every day?
2. What does the phrase 'quality over quantity' mean? How can we apply that here?
3. Why do many filmmakers around the world sometimes make cultural films or documentaries?
4. What does it mean, 'by boat, train, wagon or plane'?
5. Would you prefer to be an actor/actress in front of the camera, or a director, producer or script writer behind it?

V The future of entertainment.

So, what does the future hold in terms of entertainment? Will there be enough money and heavyweight studio influence in Hollywood to keep things as they are in the status quo? One thing that is almost certain is that the computer, directly and indirectly, will be the centerpiece for entertainment. A person can now buy a normal sized wrist watch that appears to have the sole function of telling the time and is yet a multimedia device. A smartphone with a 5" screen can now display high definition video. So where can these powerful advancements in computers and technology be put into play for entertainment purposes? 3D is certainly a reality now, and the technology is improving all the time. There will likely be 3D movies being made soon if they are not already – movies with real 3D images, not movies you merely see in 3D through the aid of 3D glasses! Robotics will certainly play a part somewhere though it is too soon to tell when.

As for computers and the age of the internet, the list of those already in place and readily available is as long as it is tantalizing. The gaming industry is making a lot of money from software for PCs and smartphones; and that's not even factoring in the console industry. MMORPGs are another giant industry player and are not to be taken lightly with regard to the future of gaming. Holograms being used in filmmaking is a new technology that is really just being talked about in hushed whispers and no details are really available yet; but it is most certainly a buzzword in the industry.

The future of entertainment is most certainly bright. Now, where did I put my shades ...?

Vocabulary

1. 3D printing
2. Multimedia
3. Hologram
4. Buzzword
5. Social media

Discussion Questions

1. Are people happy to watch movies on small screens or do people still prefer to go to watch movies on the big screens in movie theaters?
2. Have you seen a movie in 3D? Did you enjoy the experience?
3. Do you play computer games or did you used to in the past?
4. Do you enjoy movies with lots of special effects? Do you think the plot and the characters are more or less important than the special effects?
5. What do you think movies will be like in the future?