

Media

## The Most Overexposed Celebrities

Lacey Rose, 05.10.07, 6:00 AM ET

Not all press is good press, no matter what the publicists say.

Consider pop tart Britney Spears, whose every move from club-hopping to head-shaving has grabbed gobs of tabloid ink. But rather than earn her adoration, the recent media onslaught has resulted in eye rolls. And worse.

According to studies by Encino, Calif.-based [E-Poll Market Research](#), which provides appeal rankings for more than 3,000 celebrities, 72% of the U.S. population would use the term "overexposed" to describe Spears in 2007, as compared to only 54% five years earlier. To put that in perspective, most celebrities average between 3% and 7% during the peak of their careers. Worse: During that same period, her "talented" score, the presumed basis for her celebrity, fell from 35% to 25% on the E-Poll index.

### In Pictures: The Most Overexposed Celebrities

But Spears isn't the only star to have worn out her public welcome. Among others who audiences have tired of: Paris Hilton, Lindsay Lohan and the late-Anna Nicole Smith's lover Howard K. Stern. And while overexposure may have less to do with the precise number of headlines than it does the public's perception of the celebrity, the 15 stars on our list have proved that familiarity can, and does, breed contempt.

So who's to blame? The stars, or the tabloids that cover them?

Blame the celebs, says publicist Stan Rosenfield, whose clients include George Clooney and Robert De Niro. "It's like the juggler's lament: The balls go where you throw them," he says. "If you show up at places that are covered by the media, then they're going to cover you. And if you don't [show up], they won't."

It comes down to how these celebrities choose to lead their lives, adds *In Touch Weekly* editor-in-chief Richard Spencer. Risk-free lives don't sell magazines. "No one wants to read about the cup of tea and the great banana bread [a star] made yesterday," he says. "What gets exposure? Kissing a guy at 4 in the morning."

And while E-Poll Chief Executive Gerry Philpott agrees that the press can only build somebody up or tear somebody down so much, he argues that the 24/7 attention that the Internet provides expedites the fame trajectory, and the exposure that comes along with it. The result: "You can go from zero to 60 in exposure like that," he says. "And, for that matter, 60 to zero."

He cites *American Idol* cast-off Sanjaya Malakar, who comes in at No. 11 on our list, as example. Consider this: when we ran this list in early fall, the public knew nothing of the subpar singer or his many wacky hairdos. Some seven months later, the polarizing contestant is lining both the glossies and the blogs, even scoring an invite to the White House Correspondents' dinner.

That kind of attention can be a turn-off for some, especially those like Tom Cruise or Lindsay Lohan looking for respect as an artist. But for others, like Malakar, that overexposure may not be a bad thing, opines Jake Halpern, author of *Fame Junkies: The Hidden Truth Behind America's Favorite Addiction*. For them, Halpern says, it's all they have. And more importantly, without it they cease to be celebrities.

"You're only a celebrity as long as you're in the dialog of popular culture," he explains. And if you don't have your work, be it a movie or an album, to keep you in that dialog, you are forced to rely on exposure.

Spears' ex-husband Kevin Federline, who ranks third on our list, serves as another example. Without the music career he hoped would take off--Federline's debut album, *Playing With Fire*, opened to critical disdain and lackluster sales--it's his tabloid presence that continues to open doors for his celebrity. Among the latest rewards: a gig as the AXE Bodyspray pitchman.

"For certain celebrities, it becomes almost a survival instinct," says *US Weekly* Editor-in-Chief Janice Min of that need for attention. "And after a period of time out of the press, there's sort of a hunger or craving to get back in."

But how easy is it to win back the people's favor, and thus the press', once you've lost it?

Very easy, according to Philpott. "In this country, we love to build people up, tear them down and then build them back up again," he says.

But Ellis Cashmore, author of *Celebrity Culture*, argues that staging a comeback is far easier for some than it is for others. The dividing point, he claims, is talent. And without it, he questions what the celebrity can come back with.

A star like Spears, on the other hand, can use her singing and dancing skills to win over fans, he says. What enabled the pop star to rise to fame initially will be the thing that can bring her back again.

In the meantime, Rosenfield offers this advice for all overexposed stars: "How can I miss you if you don't go away?" he says. "Just go away."

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