

What Makes A Superstar?

By Loretta Manago
Entertainment Editor

If you lined Stevie Wonder, Michael Jackson, Mick Jagger and Diana Ross on one side of the room and lined Foreigner, Rick James, Teena Marie and Patti LaBelle on the other side, what would be the difference between the two groups?

The former are considered "superstars" and the latter, mere stars. All are talented individuals or groups, who have made a name for themselves in the music industry. But the select group of persons called "superstar" seem to transcend all barriers and possess a universal appeal.

Bernard Bailey, promoter of Entertainers of America, Michael Alexander, promoter of Concerts Limited, and Jack Gordon, owner of Shazada Records & Tapes, all agreed that there is a difference between a star and a superstar and were quite willing to share their opinions on what they felt it took to reach superstar status.

"The most recent situation I have been able to compare is Michael Jackson and Prince. Michael, of course, is a superstar and Prince is a star," began Bailey. "The way I look at it is that Michael appeals to kids, adults, older people, black, white, everybody. There's not a kid who wouldn't be able to tell you who Michael Jackson is, even those who can barely talk."

Bailey felt that a lot of Michael Jackson's universal appeal has to do with his clean cut American image. And then Bailey added, there is the magic.

"There's a certain kind of magic that goes with Michael's performance. It makes kids cry and teenagers scream. When they walk into a room, everything stops, and a magnet just seems to draw you towards them. It's over and beyond what you can explain, you just have to see it for yourself to be able to understand. That's how you know it's God-given, because it's unexplainable. Marvin Gaye had it, so did Elvis and the Beatles." What capped the idea of a superstar for Bailey was the reasoning that anytime a person charges \$30 a head for a concert and 40 to 50,000 people pay that kind of money, then you know they're a superstar."

"In my opinion the only thing that separates a star from a superstar is their popularity and uniqueness," commented Alexander. He brought out the fact that Michael Jackson had been a star for years



Prince
.....Has star status



Michael Alexander
.....Local promoter

and then all of a sudden he developed a product that was unique and instantly he was a superstar. "The bottom line is the more records you sell, the sooner you'll become a superstar," stressed Alexander.

For Jack Gordon the road to superstardom involves a cycle. "The type of music an artist created would have to have mass appeal. If the product appealed to enough of the populace, then that person would become a superstar. After the consumer makes his preference known by the support of the product, then the media takes over. And, lastly, the corporate structure benefits."

The record store owner cited that only in the case of Biblical figures, were superstars not made by the masses. "Normally the people make the superstars. But the prophets in the Bible—Moses, Ezekiel, and even Christ, who were strongly disliked by the masses—achieved superstar status. They didn't get it in their day, though," affirmed Gordon.

It is an ironic situation that the same people who have "made the superstars" are the same individuals from whom the superstar must be protected. In public, these figures are heavily guarded, for fear that a starry-eyed fan will unintentionally harm them, by trying to get too close to them. Our superstars have to seek out costumes of disguise, just to be able to enjoy some of life's normalities, and to remain anonymous to those who adore them.

Crossing that line from stardom to superstardom, seemingly bears both sweet and bitter fruit.

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