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Starstruck: The Business of Celebrity

Elizabeth Currid-Halkett

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How was Nike able to take a gamble on an unknown Michael Jordan and transform itself from a $900 million company to a $9.19 billion company in less than fifteen years? Why did the artist Jeff Koons's *Balloon Flower (Magenta)* sell for a record $25.7 million in 2008? What does the high school football star have in common with the Hollywood headliner? And why should an actor never, ever go to Las Vegas?

Celebrity—our collective fascination with particular people—is everywhere and takes many forms, from the sports star, notorious Wall Street tycoon, or film icon, to the hometown quarterback, YouTube sensation, or friend who compulsively documents his life on the Internet. We follow with rapt attention all the minute details of stars' lives: their romances, their spending habits, even how they drink their coffee. For those anointed, celebrity can translate into big business and top social status, but why do some attain stardom while millions of others do not? Why are we simply more interested in certain people?

In *Starstruck*, Elizabeth Currid-Halkett presents the first rigorous exploration of celebrity, arguing that our desire to "celebrate" some people and not others has profound implications, elevating social statuses, making or breaking careers and companies, and generating astronomical dividends. Tracing the phenomenon from the art world to tabletop gaming conventions to the film industry, Currid-Halkett looks at celebrity as an expression of economics, geography (both real and virtual), and networking strategies.

Starstruck brings together extensive statistical research and analysis, along with interviews with top agents and publicists, YouTube executives, major art dealers and gallery directors, Bollywood players, and sports experts. Laying out the enormous impact of the celebrity industry and identifying the patterns by which individuals become stars, Currid-Halkett successfully makes the argument that celebrity is an important social phenomenon and a driving force in the worldwide economy.

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