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АННОТАЦИЯ к СТАТЬЕ

Trapped in the Amber of Public Image

(статья приведена после аннотации)

Майкл Джексон – легенда поп-культуры, яркая звезда на вершине музыкального олимпа. Какой образ рисуется нам, когда мы слышим его имя?

Джексон известен нам эффектная, нестандартная и смелая личность. Он не боялся перемен, ему нравилось эпатировать публику на сцене. К тому же нельзя не отметить его совершенно серьезный профессиональный подход к своей работе. С одной стороны, «король поп-музыки» – смелая фигура на музыкальном поприще XX века.

Однако большинство тех, кто знал Майкла больше остальных – его фанаты, близкое окружение, сотрудники – скажут Вам, что на самом деле Джексон отличался весьма мягким, почти детским характером. Эта сторона его жизни нашла свое отражение в статье «Trapped in the Amber of Public Image», где автор четко дает нам понять, кем же был Майкл Джексон и почему это мешало ему жить.

Журналист рисует нам следующий образ поп-звезды: вечный подросток с инфантильными манерами и детским контральто. Майкл казался окружающим по-хорошему странным, будто прибывшим с другой планеты. Его тело продолжало расти, но в душе он оставался ребенком.

Казалось бы, перед нами предстала совершенно безобидная личность. Однако не все восприняли ее в положительном ключе. Современное

общество, перегруженное, прежде всего, негативной информацией, усмотрело в образе Джексона некую угрозу и обвинило его в неподобающей приверженности к детям. Так, скромный образ певца обернулся для него личным кошмаром и судебными разбирательствами.

Автор статьи отмечает, что в беседе с Опррой Уинфри в прямом эфире от 1993 года Майкл старался проанализировать свой образ и впечатление, которое он производит на публику. Более того, он пытался доказать, что на самом деле он мало отличается от остальных людей по ту сторону экрана, но машину, которую завели PR-щики и СМИ, уже было не остановить.

Однако Майкл Джексон – не единственный, кто «увяз» в своем образе. История насчитывает множество примеров, когда имидж, созданный вокруг выдающихся личностей, работал против них самих.

Развитию имиджмейкинга положило экстенсивное развитие массовой культуры в начале XX века. С появлением кинематографа и развитием печати журналов и бульварных газет людям потребовались некие «штампы», иконы, на которых можно было бы равняться или рассчитывать. Со своей стороны, многочисленные студии начали вкладывать в разработку и поддержание имиджа тех или иных личностей баснословные деньги.

Чуть позднее в историю с поддержанием имиджа стали включаться не только артисты, но и политики, спортсмены, писатели и многие другие. Причина этому – достаточно простой и короткий способ, чтобы рассказать о той или иной персоне. «Писать о Джексоне, как о человеке-ребенке, – значит расставить все точки над і», – отмечает автор.

В какой-то степени все публичные личности становятся заложниками своего образа, мало кому удастся оставаться самим собой. Кто-то создает себе имидж намеренно, чтобы скрыть свою индивидуальность и личную жизнь от прицелов камер. Иногда случается так, что придуманная история ведет за собой трагические последствия. Так, сам того не ведая, в глазах людей и Майкл Джексон стал заложником своего имиджа, избавиться от которого стало практически невозможно.

Trapped in the Amber of Public Image

For years, Michael Jackson was regarded as a child-man. He is one in a long line of celebrities enveloped by their personas.

Several years before he made "Hook," director Steven Spielberg had acquired the rights to "Peter Pan" with the intention, according to press reports then, of starring Michael Jackson in the title role.

Though Jackson was in his late 20s at the time, no one faulted the casting, for that is the way we all saw Jackson--at least since his mega-stardom and before the recent allegations of child abuse. He is a kind of child-man, asexual and eternally pre-adolescent, with his childish contralto and his diffident manner. He is also weird, living with a menagerie of animals in a sprawling retreat, but he is otherworldly weird, like E.T., not threateningly weird.

We all have to grow up eventually and face the realities of life as adults. Unfortunately, Michael Jackson never really grew up, and it seems clear that he did not want to. His body continued to grow, but by restricting his body's natural development (he was reportedly 6-feet tall with a body weight around 120 pounds – about 60-70 pounds under norm), removing all or most of his body hair, and always speaking in a low volume, high pitched voice, he tried to remain a pubescent teenager. One observer commented that Jackson, either by design or because of psychological damage, essentially stopped growing socially at age 14.

You may look younger than you really are, but society's norms do not look kindly upon middle-aged men who are obsessed with associating with young, unrelated children. Forty-year old male babysitters are not in high demand, but this is exactly what Michael Jackson wanted and tried to be.

His creation of his Neverland Park on his estate in Santa Barbara County, California was designed specifically to draw young visitors to his home. It's true that many of these children were suffering from diseases and some were from poor or disadvantaged neighborhoods – and it's also true that many were accompanied

by a parent or guardian. His young visitors and those who accompanied them described their time at Jackson's Neverland as "happy, fun, unique, much like going to Disneyland."

Frankly, I have no idea whether this image bears the slightest resemblance to the real Michael Jackson any more than I have the slightest idea whether or not the allegations are true. And that is precisely the point. Whatever we know of Jackson, whatever we think we know, was formed eons ago as celebrity culture goes, but once formed, images only reluctantly *reform* themselves.

Jackson may have set about to change his image earlier this year, amid talk that his handlers thought he was being regarded as too weird. Hence, the self-examination with Oprah Winfrey, where he sought to demystify himself. Still, I doubt anyone came away from that broadcast thinking Jackson was just a regular fellow. No, he had already been encased in the amber of image.

But Jackson is only the latest, not the first, celebrity to be so entrapped. Recent history is littered with dozens of casualties. In literature, F. Scott Fitzgerald came to early renown as the spirit of the Roaring '20s. When the Jazz Age ended, he was left the exemplar of that age, expected to carry the banner and wound up an anachronism instead. In politics, Richard Nixon burst upon the national scene as a cutthroat, and though he repeatedly attempted to rehabilitate his image, he could never shake the first impression. He would always be "Tricky Dick." In the movies, Marilyn Monroe embossed herself on the national consciousness as the sexy naif. As years passed, she grew up, she married intellectual Arthur Miller, she tried essaying more difficult roles, but she would always remain in our eyes what she had first been: the dumb blonde who only later became the tragic blonde.

It was not always so for celebrities. Images on the scale we know them are a relatively recent phenomenon. They date from the late '10s and '20s, from the emergence of the movies, tabloids and mass-market magazines of the period. They arose because the new national mass culture demanded readily accessible emblems--nouns, really--for a national dialogue. And what the new media quickly discovered was that the most accessible emblems were photographic images.

Everyone, of course, recognized movie stars as visual icons. Studios went to great lengths to create images for their stars, a sort of ideational continuity from one role to the next upon which the public could rely. Clark Gable meant a certain kind of wry masculinity. James Cagney meant kinesics. Bette Davis meant spine. Studios, then, had an enormous investment in protecting these images, in making sure that once an image was established, it not be changed lest the public be confused or disappointed.

As it turned out, movie stars were only an analogue for image-making in the larger culture. By the late '20s, the visual cast included politicians, athletes, artists, writers and dozens of others--all of whom the public instantly recognized. Yet, it was more than a matter of the media generating recognizable faces. As one cultural observer put it, the photo images translated into physical ideas: word images. Beer-bellied Babe Ruth was Rabelaisian. Leopold Stokowski with his shaggy manes was an Artist. Hemingway with his bristle was the manly author. Disheveled Albert Einstein was the absent-minded genius. Handsome Charles Lindbergh was the courageous adventurer. These images were so powerful and immutable that they resonate to this day.

In some ways, there would be no choice but to reduce public figures to images, even though we know we are missing something essential about the personality in the process. But for journalists, and the public they serve, an image is a handle, a shorthand way to get our minds around a personality. To write about Jackson as a child-man obviates the need for any further explanation. Madonna is hedonistic. Enough said. Julia Roberts fragile and confused. Shannon Doherty out of control. Arnold Schwarzenegger highly professional.

