

The X Factor: What is it, and do YOU have “IT?”

by *Gian Fiero*

What exactly is the “X factor?” You hear professionals in the entertainment industry referring to it. You hear artists alluding to it, but you rarely hear anyone defining “it.” If you are an aspiring music artist or an entertainer, it’s important that you know what “it” is because in the mind of the most seasoned and powerful industry professionals, having “it” is what determines if you are worth the investment of endless amounts of time and money.

In order to properly and accurately define what “it” is, we will approach the subject from two perspectives: emotional and visual.

Visually, it goes beyond good looks. Good looks are often confused with the “X factor.” This can be traced back to the advent and popularity of music videos in the 80’s, which created a greater emphasis and need for artists that could give “good face” or in laymen’s terms, were photogenic.

But good looks only get attention. People who have “it” can maintain attention beyond a quick glance, or even a double take. They have something called magnetism. Magnetism is a combination of personal qualities such as: a sociable personality; self-confidence; charm; inner peace; comfort with one’s sexuality; rebelliousness; obvious intellect; a unique viewpoint; intensity or focus; authority; or sense of humor. In some instances, it is truly indescribable, but very recognizable to those who have seen “it” before.

Emotionally, those with the “X factor” have a way of pushing our buttons psychologically. They make us feel good or inspired. Pissed off or aggravated. Challenged or validated. Regardless of how they affect us, they engage us emotionally and the “X factor” that lives within them, speaks to something inside of us, often times, something that we are not even in touch with.

Those who are talented and would like to pursue a professional career in the music

industry as a commercial music artist must understand that for many of you, no matter how hard you work, your success and destiny have already been predetermined by the natural presence, or tangible amount, of “X factor” that you were born with.

If you have “it,” then it’s a matter of harnessing and directing the power of “it” to make “it” more easily recognizable to others. For many however, there is nothing to tap into. It’s nearly impossible to get “it”

as you get older if you didn’t have “it” when you were younger. Maturity is a nice quality to have, but it will never be mistaken for magnetism.

In my opinion, and in accordance with the laws of the “X factor,” it is only appropriate that Michael Jackson is the top selling music artist of all time. As a child, he didn’t just have “it,” he had a whole lot of “it.” He had so much of “it” that he was able to infect his four brothers with “it.”

Throughout his teen years and well into adulthood, the immensity of his talent was intensified by the high abundance of “X factor” that his father identified and helped him to develop. We have yet to see the level of intensity and focus that he displayed as a young star. He was truly destined to become the King of Pop.

Other star music artists who have “it” are: Prince, Madonna, Usher, Justin Timberlake, Cher, Christina Aguilera, Beyonce, Bonjovi, Bono, Bruce Springsteen, Barbara Streisand, Faith Hill, Tim McGraw, Garth Brooks, Eminem, Jay-Z, Ludacris, Missy Elliott, Bow Wow, Bebe & Ce Ce Winans, and Yolanda Adams to name a few.

Of course there are many music artists who have achieved success without having “it.” Often times these individuals are

driven and committed and are able to achieve their success as a result of hard work, determination, sacrifice, good timing, great marketing, or exceptional talent. These fine attributes may ignite attention, but without the “X factor” working for them, public interest and attention tends to diminish over time.

Compare Prince to Whitney Houston.

Both entered the music industry around the same age (18) and both have a tremendous amount of talent (albeit in different ways). While the world was hypnotized by Whitney’s talented gospel like voice that was stored in a model’s body (a phenomenon that she helped to usher in), Prince’s magnetism garnered interest and attention from many of those who didn’t know quite what to make of him.

People tried to define him: Is he black or white? Is he straight or gay? Is he a rocker or an r&b artist? Is he a Christian or a freak? It really didn’t matter. What mattered is that he had “it,” and “it” is what kept us intrigued. He, like Michael Jackson, has so much of “it,” that “it” tends to overshadow the immensity of his talents.

Whitney Houston on the other hand, with all of the grace and charm that she learned to fabricate while at the Wilhelmina Talent Agency, did a fine job of creating the illusion of having “it.” She did however, have a high abundance of all the other qualities that are often mistaken for the “X factor.”

Those who have “it” carry “it” with them from the cradle to the grave. Bad career decisions; a bad marriage; life’s mishaps; lack of fame; lack of money - none of those things can affect or eradicate “it.” “It” should not be confused with attitude, which is often projected. “It” is not forceful and temporary. “It” is subtle and consistent. “It” is a serious advantage that is afforded to only a small minority.

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