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Is Gwyneth Paltrow Wrong About Everything?: How the Famous Sell Us Elixirs of Health, Beauty & Happiness

Timothy Caulfield

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An exploration of the effect our celebrity-dominated culture has on our ideas of living the good life

What would happen if an average Joe tried out for American Idol, underwent a professional makeover, endured Gwyneth Paltrow's "Clean Cleanse," and followed the outrageous rituals of the rich and famous? Health law policy researcher Timothy Caulfield finds out in this thoroughly unique, engaging, and provocative book about celebrity culture and its iron grip on today's society.

Over the past decade, our perceptions of beauty, health, success, and happiness have become increasingly framed by a popular culture steeped in celebrity influence and ever more disconnected from reality. This isn't just a hyperbolic assertion. Research tells us that our health decisions and goals are influenced by both celebrity culture and celebrity endorsements, our children's ambitions are now overwhelmingly governed by the fantasy of fame, and the ideals of beauty and success are mediated through a celebrity-dominated worldview.

But while much has been written about the cause of our obsession with the rich and famous, Caulfield argues that not enough has been done to debunk celebrity messages and promises about health, diet, beauty, or the secret to happiness. From the obvious dangers, to body image of super-thin models and actors, or Gwyneth Paltrow's enthusiastic endorsement of a gluten free-diet for almost everyone, or Jenny McCarthy's ill-informed claims of the risks associated with vaccines, celebrity opinions have the power to dominate our conversations and outlooks on our lives and ourselves.

As marketing and social media bring celebrities and their admirers ever closer, celebrity status and lifestyle has become a seemingly more realistic and obtainable goal. Being famous has become the main ambition of an increasing number of average citizens, above being kind, successful, or loved. The celebrity brand is at once the most desired state of being (modern day royalty!) and one of the most socially problematic.

Caulfield provides an entertaining look into the celebrity world, including vivid accounts of his own experiences trying out for American Idol, having his skin resurfaced, and doing the cleanse; interviews with actual celebrities; thought-provoking facts, and a practical and evidence-based reality check on our own celebrity ambitions.

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