

LIVE
AND LET
DIE

YOUNG ARTISTS HAVE THE TALENT, THE FAME, THE FORTUNE ... YET MANY OF THEM DIE SO YOUNG

For as long as we can remember, there has always been an emergence of unbelievably talented individuals in the entertainment industry, achieving popularity and fame at a young age.

However, over the last few decades, we've seen a number of them pass away at an age when they should be at the peak of their careers. It has happened so often that it was given a name: the 27 Club – consisting of a group of famous, talented young artists who died at the age of 27. Whether accidental or not, most of their deaths are either alcohol or drug related. The question is: How did they get to that point?

ALL THAT GLITTERS

'Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them,' said playwright William Shakespeare. For some entertainers, their fame is purely the product of hard work and determination. For others, it's the often negative circumstances surrounding their upbringing that fanned the flames of their talent. 'Creative expression provides a way of communicating when normal channels may be blocked or are insufficient. Our creations are mirrors in which others may see themselves, and the signature of our lives that says, "this is how I saw it,"' explains psychologist Dr Ilona Tobin. Perhaps that is where the genius of musicians, such as Amy Winehouse, stems from. They draw out something raw and heartfelt from the depths of despair. Amy's biopic *Amy* noted that she wrote most, if not all, of her songs, often dealing with dark subject matter such as troubled relationships, self harm and substance abuse, which in the end was her undoing.

REALITY CHECK

'If we examine their lives, we find that their deaths are real tragedies that were happening because they were very unhappy people,' says Howard Sounes, author of *27: A History of the 27 Club* in a CNN interview. He goes on to say that these individuals often had already begun experimenting with alcohol or drugs to deal with their issues, so stardom only amplifies what was already there to begin with. 'They express their inner angst through their music, which is very entertaining for us as the public, and the music business loves them because they sell records,' says Howard, 'but often they are not looked after. They're left to fend for themselves'. DJ Avicii seems to fit Howard's analysis. Having burst onto the EDM music scene at 21, alcohol and drug abuse was all around him. In *Avicii: True Stories*, the documentary released before his death, Avicii spoke about his decision to stop touring: 'They have seen how ill I have felt by doing it, but I had a lot of push-back when I wanted to stop doing gigs. I have said, "I'm going to die." I have said it so many times.' Following his death by suicide, Avicii's family revealed that he had been dealing with mental-health issues for a long time.

TAKE CARE

Although the recent deaths of young entertainers are the result of substance abuse, it's no more than a smokescreen concealing a larger problem. These deaths are truly a terrible tragedy but they also serve as a lesson to us all: Deal with your inner demons. Life can push us to the extreme, but what defines us is how we pick ourselves up and live to tell the tale.

Narcotics Anonymous helpline:

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