

Turn off the Webcams and Cellphones – a Plea to Celebrities

By Sean McCormick

As an entertainment industry technician and a big fan of music, theatre and film, I'm making a plea to celebrities: please turn off your webcams and cellphones.

It's understandable that furloughed celebrities are getting bored and stir-crazy—it has to be jarring for those who were involved with dynamic projects to suddenly be relegated to a form of house arrest.

However, some performers' innate need to share their gifts have led to dubious decisions over the last few weeks. Many self-quarantined notables have released well-intentioned yet occasionally ham-fisted, self-produced [offerings](#) to various social media platforms. This potentially [dilutes](#) their brands and may negate the valuable escapism that their carefully-cultivated career personas provide.

Perhaps there are some fans who are enjoying witnessing their idols as zoo animals that pontificate in their bathrobes over the rigors of being stranded in their mansions, like the video that singer Sam Smith caught flak for [last month](#). But, the novelty wears thin quickly.

Celebrity-infused, tone-deaf, Kumbaya efforts like Gal Gadot's [collection of 25 celebrities](#) doing an acapella version of John Lennon's classic, "Imagine", aren't helping, either. The irony of wealthy people butchering a beautiful song about a possession-free fantasy world as a "gift" to people who may soon be without a roof, apparently didn't occur to anyone

involved.

One YouTube commenter (Valori Joy) summed it up well: “This isn’t moving. They’re singing a song about not having possessions and crap from their mansions surrounded by luxuries. Get tf outta here.”

One possible economic downside for these home-rolled performances is the potential for lowering expectations for the production value of these efforts.

The entertainment industry employs [an army](#) of various technicians and professionals who contribute to the artists’ fabulous end products. These technicians (like myself) are probably sitting at home now on unemployment—[if they are lucky](#)—most likely not taking any comfort from these [ramshackle appearances](#). Hearing Seth Meyers sound like he’s broadcasting from a shoebox while my van full of expensive audio equipment is gathering dust outside is vexing.

YouTube, reality television and other platforms have dumbed down audience [expectations of quality](#) for years now, but there is still a [demand](#) for well-produced escapism. I’ll take Brad Pitt fleeing [space pirates](#) on the Moon over some reprobate housewives throwing cheap Chardonnay at each other, any day. While it’s probable that this all shall pass when the studios, venues and theaters eventually reopen—entertainment workers’ [anxieties](#) about their livelihoods are [valid](#).

Some celebrities are getting it right, however. Recently, the Prince estate released [Prince & The Revolution: Live](#) on Prince’s YouTube channel to support the [COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund](#). Peter Hook (of New Order) and the Light also recently released a past show to benefit the [Epilepsy Society](#). A little more than a month ago, Andrew Lloyd Weber [shared](#) several musicals on YouTube. The smash musical “Hamilton” is being [released](#) a year early. More of this please!

Celebrities, instead of jumping around in your backyard in a

cell phone video that's giving everyone vertigo, why not lobby your bosses to release some of your old gems! Such charitable acts could help others, provide a temporary lean-to shelter from reality and reinforce the grandeur of well-produced material. You'll be back in the limelight soon enough.

The carefully-crafted mythos of our icons are what sold us on these performers in the first place—the process that creates them employs thousands. Instead of providing a much-needed diversion from this quagmire, this homespun “quarantainment” simply reminds us of the plight we are in.

Celebrities, take five, please.