



The Sixteenth Minute: Life in the Aftermath of Fame

By Jeff Guinn, Douglas Perry, Douglas Perry

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This fascinating examination of American celebrity asks, "What happens when your fifteen minutes are over?"

In the decades since Andy Warhol made his infamous prognosis that, in the future, everyone would be famous for fifteen minutes, celebrity has indeed become one of America's greatest growth industries. In *The Sixteenth Minute*, Jeff Guinn and Douglas Perry explore the treacherous aftermath of fame, bringing depth and insight to a subject that is often treated as superficially as the people who temporarily achieve it.

In a world where, as social historian Leo Braudy put it, "The world of images is so much better than real life," what happens when the spotlight clicks off? For their book, Guinn and Perry interviewed an array of individuals who experienced Warhol's "fifteen minutes" and survived, some more happily (and successfully) than others. The book's subjects span the celebrity spectrum from politics (former Speaker of the House Jim Wright) to professional sports (onetime Great White Hope Gerry Cooney) to entertainment (Fame diva Irene Cara), and, of course, reality TV (a rare glimpse of *American Idol* winner Kelly Clarkson as she frets about how to remain in the spotlight she craved from childhood).

No one who experiences fame walks away the same. All the men and women profiled in *The Sixteenth Minute* have had to move on with their lives. Often, they found ways to reclaim their self-respect, if not always their reputations. In a few instances, the desire to recapture former glory eclipsed common sense with predictably painful results. In every case, their experiences reflect our culture, where fame is often considered the ultimate life achievement.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Popular culture's interest in celebrities who are no longer popular generally takes one of two forms. Either the formerly famous person is mercilessly mocked or they're treated with condescension and pity. In *The Sixteenth Minute*, authors Jeff Guinn and Douglas Perry choose a more interesting direction in profiling people whose proverbial 15 minutes have expired. The subjects, including Irene Cara of, ironically, *Fame*, wrestler-turned-novelist Mick Foley, and former Speaker of the House Jim Wright, are left to speak for themselves and discuss what may have brought them to celebrity, what caused them to subsequently fade, and what they intend to do next. In between the individual profiles, the authors take on one of the weirder rises to fame of the 20th century: Melvin Dummar, the aspiring entertainer from Utah listed as a beneficiary in a will purported to be from the late billionaire Howard Hughes.

Life in the 16th minute is not the same for everyone. Cara claims to be glad to be rid of the hype but is still clearly bitter about the movie and recording industries, former heavyweight boxer Gerry Cooney seems to have a much better life as a New Jersey dad than he did as an alcoholic prizefighter, former Dodgers shortstop Maury Wills has channeled his obsessive drive away from baseball and drugs and toward sobriety, and Foley, who loves being a novelist but is apparently not good at it, is continually drawn back to the ring and the fans who made him a star. But Guinn and Perry are wise to give so much room to the story of Dummar, whose constant schemes to achieve fame failed repeatedly but who by accident (or some say design) reached a level of notoriety beyond both his imagination and control. A darkly hilarious section describing Dummar's ill-fated Reno disco revue should be enough to make the reader never wish fame on anyone. --John Moe

From [Booklist](#)

Andy Warhol's famous proclamation that everyone will be famous for 15 minutes went from clever aphorism to cliché in, well, about 15 minutes. But what happens after the 15 minutes are over? Here the authors examine the lives of the formerly famous: Maury Wills, the superstar ballplayer who suddenly became a nobody and didn't know how to handle it; Kelly Clarkson, the *American Idol* winner who dreamed of being famous all her life and who is doing everything she can to prolong her quarter-hour; and (in several chapters) Melvin Dummar, the subject of the movie *Melvin and Howard*, who claimed to be the recipient of a will written by Howard Hughes. Dummar's quest for fame is hands-down the most interesting in the book, mainly because he seems so unaware of his need for notoriety. The authors reflect perceptively on why being famous can be so important, but the book hits its stride when they address the more compelling question: How do we put ourselves back together when the quest for fame has torn us apart? *David Pitt*
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About the Author

Jeff Guinn is books editor at the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. He is the author of eight books, including *The Sixteenth Minute: Life in the Aftermath of Fame* and *Our Land Before We Die: The Proud Story of the Seminole Negro*, which received the Texas Book Award.

Jeff Guinn is also the author of the bestselling Christmas Chronicles series, which includes *The Autobiography of Santa Claus*, *How Mrs. Claus Saved Christmas*, and *The Great Santa Search*. He lives in

Fort Worth, Texas.

DOUGLAS PERRY is an award-winning writer and editor whose work has appeared in the *Chicago Tribune*, *The San Jose Mercury News*, *Details*, and *The Oregonian*. He is the online features editor at *The Oregonian* and the co-author of *The Sixteenth Minute: Life in the Aftermath of Fame*. He lives in Portland, Oregon.

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