

Lindsay Lohan should learn a few real-world lessons

by David L. Coddon

For weeks I've been refraining from joining the Whither Goest Lindsay Lohan? debate, refusing to crack bad jokes (like saying "Lindsay: Fully Loaded" is her best movie), avoiding TMZ and PerezHilton.com and supermarket tabs, and pretending to pay attention to only high culture.

I can pretend no longer. For Lindsay's sake, I must speak out.

Unlike the troubled - and trouble-courting - Paris Hilton, who's famous for being famous, or Britney Spears, whose onetime successful career was a product of marketing and packaging acumen more than talent, Lindsay Lohan has demonstrated potential as a legitimate adult actress. As recently as 2004, she shone in the sardonic "Mean Girls," and she followed that up two years later with "Bobby," an ensemble film in which she proved to be one of the few affecting characters, and "A Prairie Home Companion," an ensemble film in which she held her own with heavyweights Meryl Streep and Lily Tomlin. (Never mind her two turkeys this year - "Georgia Rule" and the abominable "I Know Who Killed Me.")

Never mind recounting her dirty-laundry list of familial, legal and substance-abuse woes, either. Even if you've tried to stay away from them, it's virtually impossible. You know Lindsay Lohan and her sad story; don't try to deny it.

Saddest of all, to me, is the ever-prevailing sentiment - in and outside the vast blogosphere - that "Lindsay's going to end up dead."

This much is true: She has much more to lose than her career.

CAN LINDSAY BE SAVED?

The answer was suggested to me by my L.A. attorney sister, who makes sense: Send Lindsay Lohan not to jail, not to celebrity rehab, but to college. Four earn-a-degree years of college. Enjoy the insulation of academia, cloistered from the real world's pressures and expectations. Live in a dorm a year. Go to pep rallies. Hang out at the quad. (No keggers, though.)

You say onetime child star Lindsay Lohan couldn't attend college without being mobbed by paparazzi? That she wouldn't be allowed to blend in with the other students?

Ask onetime child star Jodie Foster (Yale, class of '85) about that. Ask onetime child star Brooke Shields (Princeton, class of '88).

Yeah, Lindsay's more notorious than either of those two, and much more appealing to the media's lunatic fringe. But once she got settled at Whatever U. or Wherever College, and stayed out of hot water for a month or two, the loons will lose interest and move on to some other bad girl. There's always one coming down the pike.

In college, Lindsay would be accountable and, possibly, responsible.

Taken seriously, higher education can make men of boys and women of girls. It might make a good woman out of a bad girl. It might even save a life.

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