

FAMILY FORTUNES

Thanks to social media, millennial offspring are afforded a trajectory that can eclipse that of their famous parents, without requiring the inconvenience of a weighty résumé. By Kerry McDermott

It's a pretty safe assumption that you don't know what Liza Todd likes to eat for breakfast. You probably have no idea who Liza Todd is. But if Elizabeth Taylor had given birth to her only daughter in 1997, instead of 1957, you could likely hazard a pretty good guess. A simple scroll of her Instagram feed is all it would take to throw up a snap of a millennial Liza's preferred egg dish.

In reality, Liza Todd is a 59-year-old divorced mother-of-two living a quiet life in upstate New York. But what if she had come of age today, when a Kardashian can wield greater cultural clout than some world leaders and fame is fetishised above all else? At the very least, a Burberry campaign would have beckoned. And why wouldn't Liz Jr be sharing her life online if she were a 20-year-old ingénue with violet eyes to match her mother's? Aside from the fact the rarefied existence of the celebrity offspring tends to play out in settings that cry out to be double tapped (glamorous parties, palatial mansions, far-flung beaches, etc), social media now provides an easy springboard to stardom for all those with so much as a passing interest in following in their parents' footsteps. A celebrity lineage has always been a powerful currency, but thanks to the internet, millennial stars-in-waiting have the perfect means of leveraging a well-known parent into a stab at success all their own.

Zoë Kravitz, the daughter of Lenny Kravitz and Lisa Bonet, for one, is frank about the advantages that come with being the scion of a celebrity family. "It was very easy for me to get an agent when I wanted to act, for obvious reasons," the 28-year-old has said. And Zoë's popularity on Instagram (2.7m followers and counting) doubtless helped confirm the model, actress and singer's current spot among this generation's coolest multi-hyphenates.

Turning the world's fascination with their family into a personal fan base via social media gives burgeoning stars a greater degree of control over their image than previous generations, too. Even as recently as 2002, Kelly Osbourne was able to launch a career off the back of her famous father – but was initially subject to the mercenary editing of the reality TV show that allowed her to do it. Her every temper tantrum, teenage heartbreak and awkward encounter was captured to great comic – if not always wholly flattering – effect.

Kendall and Kylie Jenner, at the crest of the second wave of reality stars, know what it is to have a famous relative or five, also grew up in front of the camera. But off-duty, the Jenner sisters can communicate directly with their astronomical Instagram followings (80million and 93million and counting, respectively) to reveal the exact version of themselves they want their fans to see.

Often the level of interest in a celebrity parent is such that the mere act of setting up a social media profile is all it takes for their child to become as big a source of fascination. The fashion world flocked instantly to Kaia Gerber's feed when Cindy Crawford's daughter started posting selfies that demonstrated just how powerful those supermodel genes can be. And Cruz Beckham, third child of David and Victoria, garnered 30,000 followers within an hour of his blue tick hitting Instagram last year. That figure is now in excess of 670,000 – and the aspiring pop singer (what else for the son of a former Spice Girl?) is still only 12 years old. But why not start early? Every would-be star needs a captive audience, and when your parents are two of world's most famous people, if you post it, they will come.

Lenny Kravitz and daughter Zoe at the 1997 MTV Music Video Awards. (Photo by Richard Young/Rex/Shutterstock)

