

I Enjoy the Show, but Don't Expect Me to Cheer and Scream

Shôn Ellerton, February 10, 2024

Just because I'm not jumping around nor screaming my head off like a lunatic, it doesn't mean I'm not enjoying the performance.



Are you one of those people that can never seem to muster up all the emotion and hype to cheer and yell at a sports match? Yet appreciate the mastery of the sport whether it be technique or watching physical boundaries being pushed not really showing much in the way of preference who wins or not? Do you feel like the only one in the bleachers observing with fascination while the others are jumping up and down out of their seats with unbridled excitement when someone scores a point?

Well. If you're one of those people, you're not alone because I am one, and I know a few others who are the same. And it's not something which I developed when I got older because I have always seemed to be wired that way. Within such groups of people, I often feel like part of the 'out crowd' looking seemingly uninterested in my surroundings but deep within, enjoying the spectacle. In all honesty, I'm not terribly comfortable in crowded spaces but even within smaller gatherings. For example, a group of friends watching some sports match on TV, most of whom are yelling their heads off with excitement, I watch intently but silently with a stone-cold expression. It's not a great look to others and I often feel the need to convey to the others that I *am* interested but can't get an emotional rise from it. I'm certainly not going to pretend by frantically moving my arms about and shouting randomly from time to time to be more accepting to the 'in crowd', that's for sure. Those who know me, know full well that I do not like to be conditioned and I *never* follow others unless

there's a real reason to do so. If some out there think I'm a weirdo, so be it. Couldn't care less.

Now obviously, there's this whole thing about being supportive by showing some form of appreciation, usually in the form of clapping. That's one hundred percent okay with me. Although, I do wonder where, how and when clapping started in the first place. Maybe a bunch of stone age people came up with the idea of the wheel and all their stone-age mates were so utterly amazed that they came up with the idea of it. Who knows?

It is not just with sports events gatherings I have this, what others may call an affliction, of being deadened to showing much emotion. Even such activities involving thrill-seeking, I still fail to show much in the way of explicit excitement. For example, the world of rollercoasters. Even in my mid-fifties, I'll take on any roller coaster, and let it be known that there are some bad-ass coasters out there in the world which will scare the hide off a moose. I'll get stressed out having to wait in the queue to get to the car of the ride, but once strapped in, I'm as calm as a koala in the midday sun. I absolutely enjoy the thrill of the ride, but my facial expression and deportment shows otherwise. Although not being a mega ride to today's standards, I jumped on a rollercoaster with my niece in Santa Cruz, California. She thought I was utterly bored and quipped later after the ride was finished, that I was near to having a light nap on it.

In my younger single years, I was a regular at the local pub after work on Fridays with my workmates. This was usually followed by a late night at the nightclub a little further down the road. Drinking beer, having a good chat, and chasing women was on everyone's mind. In my late twenties, I was one of those hardened fitness freaks during the week, but during the weekend, it was playtime and relaxation. So, come Friday night, I am in need of some good conversation with a few pints of beer but it all goes to pot when it comes to the nightclub bit. It got to the point that the music became overbearing, not that I disliked the music. Far from it. I was always into some good electronic dance and hard techno music, but as for conversation, that was out the window. Couldn't hear a word. Then some of the others were dancing, just for the sake of dancing. By this point, I had a fair few drinks inside of me, but knew full well that I'd look like a right buffoon trying to coordinate myself on the dancefloor. Moreover, I don't enjoy dancing either. So I'd stand against one of the pillars in one of those large cavernous nightclubs with a short in my hand

watching some tosser with half his balls out of pants trying to woo some scantily-clad lass on the floor by trying to act all cool and suave. In most cases, it's short-lived and the woman walks away and re-joins her clan of buddies presumably on the lookout for 'real men'. Meanwhile, as the music reverts from cool house techno to old popular cringeworthy classics like *YMCA* by The Village People or *Le Freak* by Chic, or worst of all, *Dancing Queen* by Abba, it's time to exit quick because you'll be expected to join in the 'fun' making stupid letters with your arms and then listen to everyone howl out of tune to *Dancing Queen*. Yeah. No thanks.

But I went to these nightclubs just the same. I had my close buddies with me and I took delight observing all the antics which happened in these places. But I felt, again, like part of the 'out-crowd'. Instead of joining in the revelry by dancing my socks off and trying in vain to understand what the hell someone is trying to say to me over the loud music, I analyse my surroundings in minute detail. The size of the venue and just how much can it hold. The sound system and the awesomeness of the DJ, a skill which I have always admired. The bouncers, and their ability to take down someone to the floor with ease when required. But from all this, I simply love electronica and I love it when it's loud. But don't expect me to follow others in making silly dance moves and pretending to be all happy and jolly by raising my arms and shouting like a pissed fart. After I've had enough, I'd be the one nodding off in the chill-out room.

As for being in the 'in-crowd', I was never one of them. Not for the sake of purposely *not* being in the 'in-crowd' but because I never understood what the big deal was in being part of the 'in-crowd'. In my youth, I was always a bit of a loner, however, with good friends which I first met during school days and later, I was *the mentor*, the *guide*, the person they looked to me as being some sort of oracle of new-found knowledge. I was grossly eccentric, highly risk-taking in a physical sense, and liked to do hard things in general. I'd love to elaborate on this topic for another piece, but suffice to say, that I *always* revered the difficult path.

Not being part of the 'in-crowd' had its challenges of course. Especially in those school years back in Colorado. Loner kids on the fringe are more likely to be a target of ridicule and some of them will adopt the pretence of being interested and knowledgeable of what the 'in crowd' are talking about. Just to be accepted. For example, I knew that John Elway was a serious dude at football with the

Denver Broncos, but that was all I knew because I never watched team sports, although I sometimes enjoyed playing them. Never knowing or really wanting to learn the intricacies of the rules of American football, I had difficulties engaging with others on topics involving team sports. Still to this day, I'd sit around a table of workmates, friends and acquaintances and should they start veering towards team sports in the flow of conversation, I rapidly lose interest. This is because the conversation will focus on points, seasons, particular sportsmen, and who's more likely to win the next game. I'm not going to pretend that I am interested either, because that's just being false. There are many others out there who will be in the same boat even if it's part of the minority.

Same holds true for rock concerts, which I very rarely attend. The upside, of course, is to see the spectacle and enjoy being immersed in the music. There's nothing quite like the raw power of a live concert. But then there are the obvious downsides. Being squeezed together in a crowded venue, paying an exorbitant fee for admission, and being herded around like sheep. But the worst part for me is being around a bunch of lunatic fans jumping all over the place, spilling their drinks on me, blocking my view, and in general, being a pain in the arse expecting that you'll do the same. Not only do I hate being jostled about in crowded environments, I most certainly won't be flying up and down shrieking my head off. And I don't know if it's a trigger point, but if anyone on stage shouts to the audience and says something like, 'OK everyone! Let's make some NOISE!!!', I don't want to. Like I mentioned before. I don't like to be conditioned.

Finally, I put it out there that if something's popular in general, it attracts more of the 'in crowd' rather than the 'out crowd'. Those in the 'in crowd' seem to be more prone to flailing their arms, screaming and cheering with the others. To follow the behaviour of others because they *want* and *like* being part of the 'in crowd'. Perhaps this is the definition of popular and, I daresay, the mainstream.