Shayne's dreams come true – but will they be shattered?

Paul Flynn interviews Shayne Ward, winner of TV talent show, *The X Factor*.

1 It is a week before *The X Factor* live tour when I meet the winner of the series, Shayne Ward. 'It has been mental,' he says, referring to the past six months of his life. 'I've just been talking to Louis Walsh on the phone. Louis Walsh!' Walsh, top record producer and *The X Factor* judge, now manages Shayne's career. 'I was talking to Simon Cowell (celebrity record producer) yesterday!' He shakes his head in amazement. And these people are telling me they're excited about working with me. 'I can't get my head round it.'

2 Shayne is about as natural as any pop star arriving in the public arena can be. 'I just can't accept where I am now,' he says sincerely. 'It doesn't feel real. To me, this is just a job.' 'What do you think being famous feels like?' I ask him. 'I'm not sure, to be honest. Different from this?' he laughs, with only a hint of nerves.

3 Since winning *The X Factor*, Shayne's success has been phenomenal. His debut single took just three days to reach the number one spot. On tour, he's going to play to audiences of 10,000 on average. He has already brought the house down at a gig in his home city. 'I walked out after that performance and just thought, "I'm dreaming!"'

4 Shayne is one of a family of seven children. Times were hard, but he has never wished for a different childhood. Although he thought about going to college, he ended up leaving school at sixteen, just to help his mum pay the rent. He set out on his reality show journey shortly afterwards. When he told his friends he had an audition for *The X Factor*, none of them really believed him. 'I thought I'd go for it because my family wanted me to, but I never really believed that I would win.'

5 Naturally, Ward is a fan of reality TV talent shows. 'They're brilliant, because people who want recording contracts try for years and get nowhere. Then these competitions come along and the people at home decide whether they like the singers or not. So it's not just a few people at a record company deciding who gets a chance.' But the previous winner of *The X Factor* only had one hit. He hasn't been heard of since then. Is Shayne Ward going to be another talent show flop?

6 A lot of people feel cynical about reality TV show winners and their chances of continuing success. Audiences usually lose interest in them as soon as the show has finished. In fact, contestants on shows like *Big Brother* are given severe warnings from the show's producers beforehand, basically telling them 'you will not be liked'. Talent shows like *The X Factor* have to offer contestants a kind of stardom though, and something they can think of as a career, for a few months afterwards at least.

7 Later, I hear four songs that will appear on Shayne's debut album. To my ears they sound very middle-of-the-road and dull. I cannot help thinking that Shayne Ward deserves more than this. A lot of people may buy the album, but few will love it. If the record producers are being true to Shayne when they say they are excited by working with him, I wonder whether they are also being true to themselves?

8 Backstage at one concert, I meet Shayne's charmingly unaffected girlfriend from before, during and, pleasingly, after *The X Factor* show. She fights back tears and explains, 'Last time I was here was for international superstar Justin Timberlake. This time it's for my boyfriend.' I walk away from the stadium with the sincere hope that Shayne's journey will not end here.



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3 **Read the article and choose the best answer, A, B, C or D.**

1 What does 'it' refer to in line 12 of the text?
- **A** the tour
- **B** the experience
- **C** the phone call
- **D** the show

2 What do we learn about Shayne Ward in paragraph 2?
- **A** He is uncertain how well known he is.
- **B** He finds his present situation unacceptable.
- **C** He thinks his job isn't particularly glamorous.
- **D** He is confused about the nature of fame.

3 After performing in his home city, Shayne felt
- **A** embarrassed.
- **B** disappointed.
- **C** overwhelmed.
- **D** relieved.

4 After leaving school at sixteen, Shayne
- **A** set off on a trip.
- **B** gave up performing.
- **C** got himself a job.
- **D** applied to a college.

5 What does 'flop' in line 44 mean?
- **A** someone who is unsuccessful
- **B** someone who is unpopular
- **C** someone who isn't ambitious
- **D** someone who lacks character

6 What does the writer suggest about reality talent show winners in paragraph 6?
- **A** They are treated badly by producers.
- **B** Their fame is short-lived.
- **C** Audiences never really like them.
- **D** They don't expect to be popular.

7 In paragraph 7, the writer suggests that Shayne
- **A** is not a very good singer.
- **B** is popular with a few people.
- **C** hasn't had enough publicity.
- **D** needs a better choice of songs.

8 How does Shayne's girlfriend react to his stage performance?
- **A** She is thrilled.
- **B** She is scared.
- **C** She is upset.
- **D** She is disappointed.

4 **Find words and phrases in the article that match these meanings.**

1 exciting (para 1) _____
2 I can't understand it (para 1) _____
3 very great (para 3) _____
4 received loud applause (para 3) _____
5 a show on stage (para 3) _____
6 life was difficult (para 4) _____
7 have no success (para 5) _____
8 unwilling to think well of (para 6) _____
9 safe, not extreme (para 7) _____
10 natural (para 8) _____

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