THE REVOLUTION THAT WASN’T

WHY THE GENERALS REMAIN EGYPT’S REAL RULERS
Star-Powered Start-ups

Hollywood's new triple threat: actor, singer, would-be tech mogul. Taking a page from the Ashton Kutcher playbook—the TV star runs his own digital-media company and helped fund Foursquare, Skype and Spotify—a new crop of A-listers is aiming to parlay their celebrity into smash-hit start-ups. In lieu of launching clothing lines or branding vodkas, they want the cachet, and the cash, of "becoming a serious tech investor," says Eli Portnoy, CEO of Orlando-based branding firm Culture Ranch.

That's a daunting challenge. Although celebrities excel at getting attention—budding investor Justin Bieber commands 25 million Twitter followers—business is a different game. For every Kutcher, there's a Kardashian: a star seemingly willing to slap his or her face onto anything for a paycheck (in the sisters' case, a hidden-fee-laden debit card). And while that may build buzz, "start-ups make or break it based on what their product actually does," says Portnoy, meaning the best A-list partners are the ones learning the trade, like these five current leaders.

**Ashton Kutcher**
The king of Hollywood's tech scene doesn't just fund start-ups; he offers sage advice. During a recent visit to Dwolla, Kutcher improved the virtual-payments network by streamlining its sign-up process, says CEO Ben Milne. "He kicks ass with product."

**Kevin Love**
At 12Society, which has stars curate monthly gift boxes for subscribers, the NBA hotshot, who's a co-founder, launched the site's blog, featuring content from Blake Griffin, Nick Cannon and others. "He's really into writing and fashion," says CEO Sameer Mehta. "He kicks ass with product."

**Zooey Deschanel**
Some 400,000 people a month visit HelloGiggles.com, thanks largely to the New Girl star's direction: she dodged the logo, dreamed up a bunny-cam live stream and has users comment via Facebook "to keep things positive," says co-founder Sophia Rossi.

**50 Cent**
"If I couldn't find it, I wanted to create it," the rapper has said of starting SMS Audio, whose stylish, innovative headphones—which enable studio-quality sound via Kleer wi-fi technology, per 50's insistence—are boosting his annual income past $300 million.

**Jessica Alba**
Her insights at eco-friendly baby-product e-tailer The Honest Company—like picking clear bottles over opaque ones, so moms can see the contents—have helped the company net $27 million in funding. "I also make sure we have a sufficient amount of caffeine on hand," she says.

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**THE NEXT CLASS OF TECHIES IN TRAINING**

**Andy Samberg** co-founded CanopyHop, an online portal for thrill-seekers; he recently battled ninjas in a promotional video.

**Justin Bieber** invests in teen-centric start-ups like Spotify (music), Stamped (recommendations), TinyChat (online video hangouts) and Sijo Studios (gaming).

**Selena Gomez** funded Postcard on the Run, a smartphone app that turns photos into virtual postcards; she told Forbes she offers "a 19-year-old's perspective."

**LL Cool J** partnered with Sony to launch MyConnect, a digital platform that allows multiple artists around the world to record music together in real time.