

# Top 10 entertainment stores of the year

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From Charlie's Sheen's very Sheenius meltdown to the end of the Harry Potter movie franchise to several big-name comedians performing locally, 2011 had its ups, downs and who-the-heck cares moments. Here are our picks for the 10 most talked-about stories of the year.

## 1. Charlie Sheen's 'Winning' streak

It was the year of Tiger Blood. And Charlie Sheen reigned. Celebrities have meltdowns in public all the time, yet we hadn't had a really epic breakdown since Britney Spears shaved her head bald.

Maybe that's what made Sheen's collapse so transfixing. He gave us everything we expected in a train wreck – and more: Custody battles! Jittery interviews! Goddesses! And of course, “WINNING!”

Watching his daily dose of acting crazy was more entertaining – and addictive – than any episode of “Two and a Half Men.” But we overdosed when Sheen went on his stand-up tour, which basically gave him a pass to go on rambling diatribes on foolish people's dimes.

Sadly, even as pathetic as it was, it still had more live vocals than a Britney tour.

## 2. Funny business

McHenry County got a dose of Hollywood in 2011 as several comedians performed throughout the county.

Lily Tomlin performed a Valentine's show at the Raue Center for the Arts, taking her audience on what the Washington Post called a “wise and howlingly funny” trip with more than a dozen of her timeless characters. In November at the Raue, “Full House” star Bob Saget brought his adult brand of comedy on stage while comedian Larry Miller shared his perspective on marriage, children and drinking during “Cocktails with Larry Miller.”

At the Woodstock Opera House, “Cash Cab” host Ben Bailey performed his brand of stand-up on March 25 and “The Mary Tyler Moore Show” star Ed Asner brought Franklin D. Roosevelt to life on Jan. 13 in “FDR.”

## 3. Harry Potter and the record-breaking franchise

The July release of “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - Part 2” marked the end of the eight-film fantasy series that began in 2001 with “Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone.”

Based on the popular book series by J.K. Rowling, the movies made household names of its stars, Daniel Radcliffe (Harry Potter), Rupert Grint (Ron Weasley) and Emma Watson (Hermione Granger).

The film series is the highest-grossing of all-time in inflation unadjusted dollars, with \$7.7 billion in worldwide receipts. Each film is in the 35 highest-grossing films of all-time in inflation unadjusted dollars. All told, the eight Potter films earned a cumulative \$2.4 billion in America and a truly remarkable \$7.7 billion worldwide.

#### 4. Legends lost

Movies, TV, music and technology all suffered losses with the passing of legends and rising stars in 2011.

Hollywood lost one of its greatest stars when Liz Taylor died at age 79 on March 23. Singer Amy Winehouse died of alcohol poisoning on July 23. Apple co-founder Steve Jobs died of pancreatic cancer on Oct. 5.

Other deaths included Gerry Rafferty (Jan. 4); Nate Dogg (March 15); Macho Man Randy Savage (May 20); Jeff Conaway (May 27); Clarence Clemmons (June 18); “Jackass” star Ryan Dunn (June 19); Peter Falk (June 24); Andy Rooney (Nov. 5); Heavy D (Nov. 8); Patrice O’Neal (Nov. 28); and Harry Morgan (Dec. 7).

#### 5. Oprah bids adieu

After a 25-year reign on TV, Oprah Winfrey ended her daytime talk show, “The Oprah Winfrey Show,” on May 25.

An astonishing 16.4 million viewers watched Oprah say goodbye, capping 25 seasons and 4,561 episodes. She marked her final broadcast by simply addressing her fans.

The show was very influential, and many of its topics penetrated into American pop-cultural consciousness. Early episodes followed more sensationalistic social issues, but Oprah eventually transformed her series into a positive, spiritually uplifting experience by featuring book clubs, celebrity interviews, self-improvement segments and philanthropic forays into world events. The show originally launched as “AM Chicago,” a half-hour morning talk show airing on WLS-TV in Chicago.

The show gained credibility by not trying to profit off the products it endorsed; it had no licensing agreement with retailers when products were promoted, nor did the show make any money from endorsing books for its book club.

Currently, the 57-year-old mogul serves as CEO of her cable network, OWN, and will host a new prime-time show called “Oprah’s Next Chapter” in January.

#### 6. Adele’s ‘Rolling’ in it

When singer Adele’s sophomore album, “21,” dropped on Feb. 22, few knew the level of success the album and the singer would achieve this year.

The record hit the top of the charts, where it spent a spectacular 13 weeks, becoming the year’s best-selling album and garnering six Grammy nominations. “21” features the mega-single “Rolling in the Deep” and the heart-wrenching ballad, “Someone Like You.” In December, Adele made Billboard history becoming the first female singer to be named top artist, have the top album and score the top single with “Rolling in the Deep” all in one year.

In October, after struggling with voice problems and schedule changes for months, the 23-year-old canceled the remainder of her 2011 concerts and promotional appearances. She underwent vocal cord microsurgery in November and is expected to make a full recovery.

#### 7. Mozart lives in Woodstock

In celebrating the legacy of Mozart, the Woodstock Mozart Festival has built a legacy of its own. The festival celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2011.

Spanning three weekends in August, the festival showcases internationally recognized guest artists and conductors at concerts performed in the Woodstock Opera House.

Roughly 2,000 people attend the festival each year. Other nonprofit events similar in size never reach that point, said Anita Whalen, the festival’s general director. “Every weekend is quite spectacular, which has been the trademark or hallmark of the festival all along,” she said.

#### 8. Keeping up with divorce

Months of media buildup to the wedding of reality star Kim Kardashian and NBA player Kris Humphries focused on speculation about Kim’s dream dress, the guest list and most of all the money that was poured into the lavish affair.

But shortly after Kim and Kris celebrated their made-for-TV wedding, which aired on the E! network, Humphries got his own dose of reality as Kim filed for divorce Oct. 31 after only 72 days of marriage.

Humphries now is asking the court to annul the marriage on the grounds of fraud.

#### 9. A royal affair

All eyes were on London in the early hours of April 29 as Prince William married commoner Catherine Middleton at Westminster Abbey.

The day was filled with many foreign royals, diplomats and stars among the guest list that topped 1,900, glamorous attire – those hats! the satin and lace wedding dress by British designer Sarah Burton! – and a procession through the millions of onlookers to Buckingham Palace, where the couple appeared on the balcony and kissed – twice! – to the delight of the crowd surrounding the palace. The service and fanfare was broadcast live around the world, and an estimated 23 million people tuned in in the U.S. alone.

#### 10. ‘Street’ on the right path

After four years of “research and development,” Crystal Lake’s Williams Street Repertory launched its first production, “The Rocky Horror Show,” in October at the Raue Center for the Arts.

When Richard Kuranda became executive director of the Raue in 2007, creating an in-house theater company was among his goals. Years of focus groups and feasibility studies preceded the hiring of T. Paul Lowry in September 2010. It paying off since “Rocky Horror” opened to strong ticket sales and strong reviews.

WSR added another production to its belt in December with “Santaland Diaries,” an anti-Christmas classic that celebrates the darker side of the holidays.

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