

Editorial

Rating records no solution for parents

"I knew a girl named Nikki, I guess you could say she was a sex fiend, I met her in a hotel lobby, masturbating with a magazine, she said, how'd you like to waste some time, I could not resist when I saw little, Nikki grind..."

This excerpt from Prince's "Purple Rain" album is an example of what a group that spoke during a Senate committee hearing earlier this month is seeking to regulate. The Parent's Music Resource Center is pushing a measure that would require albums containing lyrics that promote sex, drugs and violence to be labeled according to a rating system similar to the one used to rate movies. Supporters of the group, which was founded by Tipper Gore and Susan Baker, the wives of Sen. Albert Gore, D-Tenn., and Treasury Secretary James Baker, respectively, claim that the system would enable parents to better monitor their children's choice of music.

Supporters appear to want to use the system in order to prevent albums containing explicit lyrics from falling into the hands of young people. But even if the effort can surmount the wave of opposition rallied by the music industry, it will fail to produce the desired result.

First, if the labels are intended to indicate to parents which albums they may or may not want to purchase for their children, the parents must buy the album, or at least see the rating, in order for the system to work. Unless the rating is stamped or printed on the album cover or the album itself, as opposed to being printed on a sticker placed on the plastic wrapping, a rating could easily be hidden from an inquisitive parent.

And, how many parents are the primary purchasers of their children's albums, particularly if they are teen-agers? Area record shop employees believe that teen-agers are the primary purchasers of rock-oriented albums intended for their own consumption.

The album equivalents of "X" and "R" movie ratings would probably not discourage a large percentage of teen-agers from buying an album. On the contrary, a rating indicating graphic material may make the album more desirable.

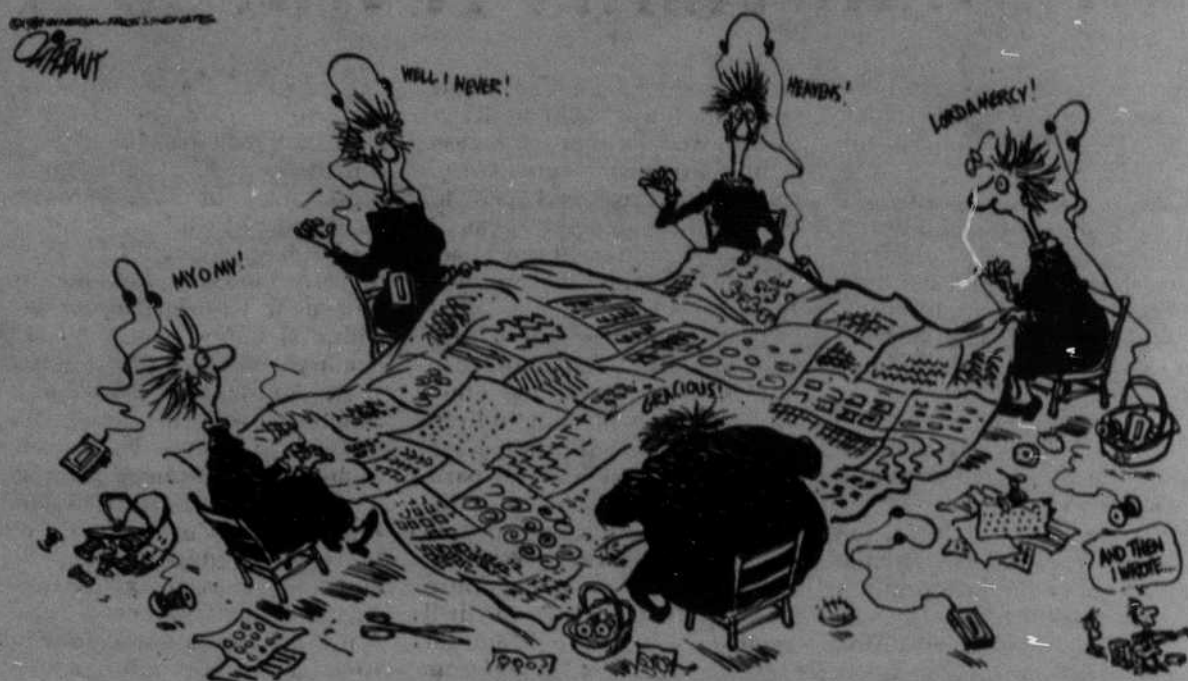
According to Jeff Hauser, the special projects coordinator of the Sterling Recreation Organization, a movie distributing company, people aged 12 to 24 attend more movies than other segments of the population. Hauser said that the movie industry prefers R-rated movies when appealing to this age group, and that the industry supports the PG-13 rating in order to gain better access to those under 17 while still providing adult material. This may indicate that young people prefer adult-oriented material. If this is accurate and if the rating system works similarly with albums, an album labeled as containing explicit material may be more attractive to a young person.

Also, the popularity of records labeled as containing explicit lyrics may be propagated by the same mechanism that increased the popularity of books once they had been banned. Announcing that a particular book is "off limits" may be as effective at ensuring that high school students read the book as actually requiring them to read it. Classic examples of this phenomenon include "Catcher in the Rye" and "Catch-22."

Peer pressure, which is especially intense during teenage years, also may prompt young people to purchase albums containing explicit material. Most of us probably remember being chided for seeing a G-rated movie in our teen-age years, and the proposed system may set the stage for similar situations concerning record albums.

Also, if records with ratings that indicate explicit lyrics generate more money, proponents of the rating system would be faced with increasing amounts of graphic lyrics due to increased pressure on artists to produce profitable material.

Further, the entire controversy reflects back to the days when Elvis and the Beatles were considered to adversely affect the moral health of young people. It appears that teen-agers have traditionally identified with music found offensive by their parents in an effort to establish a separate identity and independence. The rating system would simply make it easier for young people to identify the music that the "establishment" finds offensive.



THE LADIES OF THE CLEAN MUSIC, QUILTING AND PORN WATCH SOCIETY DISCOVER YET ANOTHER DISGUSTING ROCK LYRIC.

Letters

Tax changes

Oregonians have again said "no" to a shift to more regression in taxation in the seventh overwhelming defeat of a sales tax, but school standards remain threatened. In addition to selling schools on merit, closer attention needs to be given to present tax programs including:

- Reversing a trend to remove large classes of real property from the tax roll which has shifted an increasing load to present payers.

- Re-examination of historical exemptions and levying a minimum property tax to cover services provided for all real property, such as police and fire protection.

- Consideration of taxing intangible property, particularly that which is income producing. Such 'sources' of new revenue could relieve considerably the pressure to cut local services, including schools.

- Adjustments in state income tax laws. Present exclusions from taxable income result in overloading those now paying this tax.

Those who really care must also concern themselves with a national tax program peppered with exclusions and loop-holes.

National leaders, by slashing revenues and insisting on no new taxes, have refused to balance the federal budget. The

domino effect on Oregon's tax resources has been a disaster. Each one of us needs to put a rein on this interlude of national irresponsibility. Our representatives need to know we've had enough; that we want more discipline and fairness in federal programs of taxation and spending, and a return to reality.

Harold Barton
U of O, class of 1943

Project support

The current ASUO administration's opposition to the proposed Riverfront Research Park is unwise and in opposition to the healthy minds in the University and Eugene communities that realize that such a project would be beneficial to the University, Eugene, and Oregon.

While we must be wary of development on the whole, we must also be able to recognize when proposed development is more of a boon than a detriment. The Riverfront Research Park is not planned to be a major industrial complex. It would

deprive the city of park land, but this is the least we can offer to help out the University and the Eugene community.

Although we sometimes laugh about Eugene and her residents, probably every student here has an implicit gratefulness for the city's retained natural beauty, which is a sole product of careful development in the past. The riverfront project is no exception to this care.

I fear that the opposition to this project is less a heart-felt stance than the staging of a political vendetta against classified research. I hope that this is not the case. As far as I can tell, students, faculty and community members are by far in support of the project, with or without stipulations on the restriction of classified research.

The question is, who are we more concerned for in this issue? Clearly, the University, Eugene, and Oregon would benefit from such a project. Who would stand to lose?

Rob Young
Senior

Letters Policy

The Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing fair comment on topics of interest to the University community.

Letters to the editor must be limited to 250 words, typed, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is turned in. The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style. Letters to the editor should be turned into the Emerald office, Suite 300, EMU.

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